Introduction

Dungeons & Dragons is a cooperative game in which players create exciting fantasy stories guided by a Dungeon Master, or DM. Imagination and chance determine the fate of the players' characters.

An Ongoing Game. Each time you gather to play D&D, you're playing a single game session. These sessions connect to form adventures like the one in this set. The next time you play, the story picks up where you left off.

Choose Your Role

To play D&D with these adventures, you need two to four people to play as characters and one person to be the Dungeon Master, or DM.

Playing a Character

If you want to be one of the protagonists in your group's adventures, consider playing a character. Here's what these players do:

- **Make a Character.** Your character is your alter ego in the fantasy world of the game. Make a level 1 character using the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules). The adventures in Heroes of the Borderlands were designed with the Cleric, Fighter, Rogue, and Wizard classes in mind, but any class will do.
- **Team Up.** Your character joins the other players' characters to form an adventuring party. These adventurers are allies who face challenges and fantastical situations together. Each character has distinctive capabilities that complement those of the other characters.
- **Venture Forth.** Your character's group explores locations and events presented by the DM. You can respond to them however you can imagine, guided by the rules. Although the DM controls all the monsters you encounter, the DM isn't your adversary. The DM guides your party's journey as your characters become more powerful.

Being the Dungeon Master

If you want to be the mastermind of the game, consider being the DM. Here's what DMs do:

- **Run the Adventure.** You run the adventures within.
- **Guide the Story.** You narrate much of the action during play, describing locations and creatures that the adventurers face with read-aloud text. The players decide what their characters do as they navigate hazards and choose what to explore. Then you use a combination of imagination and the game's rules to determine the results of the adventurers' decisions.
- **Adjudicate the Rules.** You oversee how the group uses the game's rules, making sure the rules serve the group's fun. Tutorials in each adventure teach you some of those rules, but you'll want to reference the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) to better understand them.

> ***Keep It Secret***
>
> *Secrets and reveals are important DM tools. If you read any of the DM-only material and still want to experience the adventure as a player, you can—just don't let this knowledge influence your character's actions or behavior. More importantly, don't spoil any surprises for your fellow players!*

Swapping Roles

Playing a character and being the Dungeon Master aren't permanent roles. Trading places is easy.

Whenever you begin play or whenever the Player Characters decide to leave one of the adventure's three settings—the Caves of Chaos, the Keep on the Borderlands, or the Wilderness—determine who will be the DM for the upcoming section. The previous DM can either make a new character of a level equal to the other characters or play as the new DM's now-available character.

Getting Started

Once you've chosen the DM, follow the instructions below to begin play.

If You're a Character

Follow these steps to create your character:

- **Choose your Class**. Pick one of the classes from the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) as your character's Class.
- **Choose your Origin**. Pick one Background and one Species. Together, these form your character's Origin.
- **Name Your Character**. Choose a name for your character. The name can be whatever you like. When you're ready, introduce your character to the other players and your DM.

If You're the Dungeon Master

Follow these steps if you're the DM:

- **Review the *D&D Beyond Basic Rules*.** Familiarize yourself with the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) and its organization. You don't need to memorize every rule before you play, but you should understand the rhythm of play and where to find relevant information when needed.
- **Choose an Adventure Setting**. Pick one of the three adventure locations and read its introduction. If this is your first time playing D&D, the *Wilderness* section is a good place to start, followed by the *Keep on the Borderlands*. Each section contains a tutorial location with sidebars that help you run the adventure.

Now you're ready to play D&D!

Play On D&D Beyond

Bring your adventure to life with the Maps VTT, the official virtual tabletop for Dungeons & Dragons. Access it at https://www.dndbeyond.com/games (DnDBeyond.com/games) and you'll find this quickplay adventure already set up—complete with maps, monsters, and tokens ready for your party to play. Want to make it your own? Use those same components (and any others in your collection) to forge entirely new adventures all in Maps VTT.

The Adventure

Heroes of the Borderlands is for two to four characters of levels 1–3. The adventure has no overarching plot. While there are conflicts and secrets to uncover, the story that emerges is the one your group experiences.

The adventure is divided into three self-contained sections, each of which features a different area. You don't need to read one section to understand the others, and you can play and revisit them in any order. The adventure areas are as follows:

The Caves of Chaos tempt adventurers with riches and glory, obtainable by any who dare brave these monster-filled caverns.

The Keep on the Borderlands is a fortified settlement where the party can rest, purchase goods and services, and interact with locals.

The Wilderness lies beyond the ken of law. Friends, foes, and surprises await explorers who traverse these untamed wilds.

Over the course of the adventure, the characters might visit these areas more than once. They don't have to complete all the encounters in one section before exploring a different corner of the Borderlands.

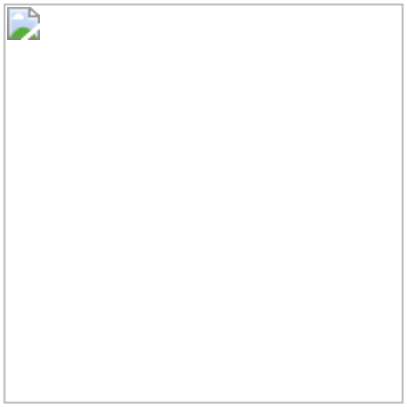
About the Original

The adventure in this set reimagines B2: The Keep on the Borderlands for the current edition of the game. First printed in 1979, the original adventure was designed for the Dungeons & Dragons Basic Set, which introduced new players and Dungeon Masters to the world of D&D—much as this set does.

Caves of Chaos

Beyond the Keep on the Borderlands hide the Caves of Chaos, a network of monster-infested caves where by a wicked cult lurks. Danger awaits foolhardy adventurers who enter the caves—but so do treasure and glory.

DM Secret. This is for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. Unless text appears in a read-aloud box (like the one below), don't read it to the players.



Getting Started

The *Caves of Chaos Map* displays all the locations characters can visit in the Caves of Chaos. The player version of this map doesn't reveal the caves' contents or names, only the cave mouths and their respective elements. Share that map with your players.

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *You pass through a dense forest of gnarled trees with grasping roots, the woods twisting as if to ward you off. Undeterred, you emerge from the tangled thicket into a stark ravine. Its rocky walls rise steeply one hundred feet or so above. Several dark cave mouths pockmark the walls at varying heights. The air is stale and quiet.*
>
> *Among the rocks and dead wood that litter the ravine's floor are the bones of animals and explorers, picked clean by scavengers. Vultures leer at you hungrily from barren branches.*
>
> *Where do you want to go?*

The Caves of Chaos table summarizes the caves in the order they appear within this. Each cave provides approximately 60–90 minutes of gameplay. The DM version of the map includes the suggested minimum level for each cave; for example, the characters should be level 2 or higher before entering cave F.

Cave A functions as a tutorial with helpful sidebars. If this is your first time as the DM, encourage the players to start there. Otherwise, have them choose a cave shown on the map.

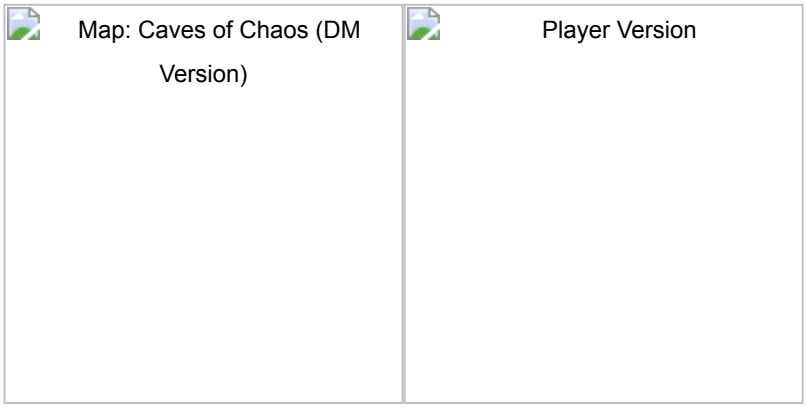
Once the player characters choose a cave, navigate to that cave's section.

Caves of Chaos

Cave	Description	Recommended Level
A: Kobold Lair	A band of kobolds stole a dragon egg, and it hatched!	1+
B: Mephit Lair	Mischievous elementals lair in this flooded cave.	1+
C: Nothic Lair	A former wizard turned monster studies in this makeshift lab.	1+
D: Goblin Lair	A gang of violent goblins throw a raucous party for their leader.	1+
E: Ogre Lair	A hulking, irritable mercenary lives in this shallow cave.	2+
F: Hobgoblin Lair	Militant hobgoblins have fortified this cave.	2+
G: Shunned Caves	A fearsome owlbear lurks in its den.	3
H: Bugbear Lair	Bugbear raiders plan an assault.	2+
I: Minotaur Lair	A malevolent minotaur prowls this ruined cave.	2+
J: Gnoll Lair	Vicious hunters scour this forsaken shrine.	2+
K: Shrine of Evil Chaos	A dastardly cult performs unholy rites in this temple.	3

Exploring the Caves

As the characters explore a cave, the characters progress through its areas, as depicted on the cave's map.



Cave Descriptions

Each description of a cave has these sections:

- **Getting Started.** This section provides instructions for the DM and introduces the cave with thematic read-aloud text.
- **Features.** Important features about the cave, such as its lighting, appear here.
- **Locations.** This section details the cave's areas and its contents, including any monsters.
- **DM's Map of the Cave.** This map displays the locations of monsters, traps, and treasure within the cave.

Rhythm of Play

When the characters enter an area for the first time, do the following:

- **Step 1:** Describe the Area. Describe what the characters perceive in the area. Focus on what they see, hear, or smell.
- **Step 2:** Ask the Players, "What Do You Do?" Players tell you what their characters do or say.
- **Step 3:** Narrate the Results. The player characters reap the consequences of their actions as outlined in the text. This might involve one or more D20 Tests (see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules)) to determine the outcome. It could also lead to combat (see below).
- **Step 4:** Repeat. When the player characters reach another area of the cave, repeat this procedure.

Combat

Though it's possible to avoid combat with many of the caves' occupants, the characters eventually will clash with creatures that can't be reasoned with. The text states when a monster might start combat. When a fight breaks out, see the "*Combat*" section in the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

The following stat blocks are used in this section:

- **Animated Flying Sword**
- **Bugbear Warrior**
- **Carrion Crawler**
- **Copper Dragon Wyrmling**
- **Cultist**
- **Gelatinous Cube**
- **Giant Centipede**
- **Giant Fire Beetle**
- **Giant Spider**
- **Gnoll Warrior**
- **Goblin Boss**
- **Goblin Warrior**
- **Gray Ooze Glob**
- **Hobgoblin Warrior**
- **Ivlis**
- **Kobold Warrior**
- **Kuo-Toa Marauder**
- **Mimic**
- **Minotaur of Baphomet**
- **Narthus**
- **Nothic**
- **Ogre**
- **Ogre Zombie**
- **Owlbear**
- **Red Dragon Wyrmling**

- **Skeleton**
- **Steam Mephit**
- **Stirge**
- **Vinx**
- **Wight Lifedrinker**
- **Zombie**

Resting

Threats abound within the caves. The characters can take only Short Rests within them. To take a Long Rest, they must first exit any cave they're in. For more on *resting*, see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

Leaving the Caves

The characters can leave the Caves of Chaos any time they choose, provided they aren't inside a cave or engaged in combat. If they return to a cave later, it is as they left it.

Character Advancement

In this adventure, the characters can gain levels by completing caves. To complete a cave, the characters must explore every area within it.

The characters gain levels by achieving the following milestones:

- **Completing Two Caves.** After the characters fully explore two caves, they advance to level 2.
- **Completing Three More Caves.** After the characters fully explore a total of five caves, they advance to level 3.

Each of these level advancements occurs only once. If the characters are already level 3, they don't gain levels by exploring the caves.

A: Kobold Lair

A band of kobolds recently stole a dragon egg and brought it to these caves to eat. But when the egg hatched and a screeching dragon wyrmling emerged, the kobolds quickly realized they bit off more than they could chew.

The kobolds tried to appease the fussy wyrmling with treasure, but they can't agree on what to do next. Should they return the wyrmling to its nest, or should they raise it themselves?

> ***Summary.*** *The beginning of each cave presents its central conflict, as well as optional ways to increase or decrease the difficulty. If the characters are level 1, don't increase the difficulty.*

> ***Bold Terms.*** *When a monster's name appears in* ***Bold*** *type, that's a visual cue to say, "Hey, DM, you should get this stat block ready. You're going to need it."*

You can add monsters, such as **Giant Fire Beetles**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can reduce the number of **Kobold Warriors** to make it easier and shorter.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *A tunnel made of hard-packed earth leads into darkness. The cave echoes with high-pitched bickering overtopped by a loud, bestial squeal.*

> ***Boxed Text.*** *Text that appears in a box like the one in this section is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.*

The sounds come from the quarreling kobolds in area A4 and the crying wyrmling in area A5.

Kobold Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Environment.** The cave has rough stone walls and a dirt floor. The floor is littered with gnawed animal bones and junk collected by the kobolds.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision or other means to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

> ***Features.*** *This section presents special features about the location. Some of these exist to help you set the mood—you might describe the crunch of animal bones under the characters' feet—while others detail important rules, such as secret doors and how to find them.*

Kobold Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map A.

Map A: Kobold Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

> ***Exploration and Movement.*** *Exploration is open-ended; the players don't take turns moving around the dungeon the way they do in combat. As they explore, direct the players to freely move around on the map, but stop them when they reach the entrance (area A1).*

A1: Entrance

> *A twenty-foot-long tunnel leads into the cave.*

This tunnel contains a hidden pit trap, as detailed below.

Pit Trap. This 10-foot-deep pit is covered by a large, dirty cloth. When a character steps on the cloth, it gives way, dumping the character into the pit, at which point the pit is no longer hidden. A creature that falls into the pit takes 1d6 Bludgeoning damage.

Rules for detecting and escaping the trap are as follows:

- **Detecting the Trap.** The pit is poorly camouflaged. A character who examines the trapped area easily discovers the pit. Once detected, the pit can be safely avoided by sidling along its perimeter.
- **Escaping the Pit.** The pit's walls have cracks big enough to serve as handholds, allowing trapped creatures to climb out easily.

A character falling into the pit alerts the kobold in area A2, who approaches the pit and crows, "Got 'em!" The encounter in that area then occurs here.

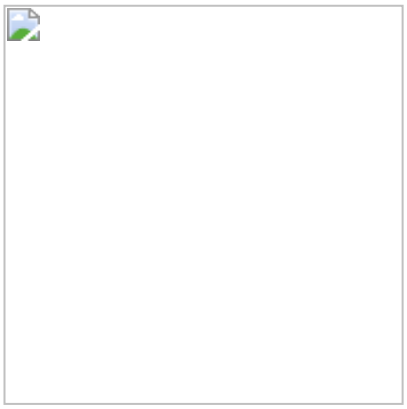
> ***Rhythm of Play.*** *Here's an example of how the pit trap in area A1 might play out:*

- ***Describe the Scene***. *Read the boxed text aloud.*
- ***Ask the Players, "What Do You Do?"*** *You might ask how the player characters enter the cave. If they charge brashly ahead, the character in the lead falls into the pit. However, if a player says their character looks carefully, they spot the trap.*
- ***Narrate the Results***. *Once the pit's presence becomes known, describe the pit and the narrow ledge around it.*

Once the players know the pit is there, ask them how their characters bypass it. If they come up with a creative solution not described in the text, err on the side of leniency and fun. Whenever you think a rule might be necessary, see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

Repeat this process for the other areas in this cave, modifying it based on their contents.

A2: Guard Nook



> *A small, bipedal reptile stands guard in this nook.*

A **Kobold Warrior** keeps watch in this nook. The guard is initially Indifferent toward intruders, but it's also naive. Rather than alerting the other kobolds when it spots the characters, it marches toward them and asks what they want.

Attitudes. *Every creature has a starting attitude toward the characters: Friendly, Hostile, or Indifferent (see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules)). Regardless, creatures defend themselves in combat.*

As an Influence action, a character can try to appease the kobold and make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 10 Charisma (Deception). The character tricks the kobold with an outlandish lie.

DC 10 Charisma (Performance). The character amuses the kobold with a jaunty tune.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces the kobold the party means it no harm.

On a successful check, the character improves the kobold's attitude to Friendly, and the kobold grants them entry, warning them cryptically about the "many-legs" to the west (see area A3). On a failed check, the kobold becomes Hostile and flees toward area A4, yelping a call to arms.

Ability Checks. *When the outcome of an action is uncertain, the game uses a d20 roll to determine success or failure. This is called a D20 Test. An ability check is one type of D20 Test. Here's how to run the ability check in area A2:*

- ***Describe the Scene****. Paint a mental picture of the kobold either by describing its words and actions or by actively roleplaying it—giving it a voice like an actor in a role.*
- ***Ask the Players, "What Do You Do?"*** *If the players aren't sure what to do, suggest ways they could respond to the kobold, like trying to deceive or persuade it.*
- ***Narrate the Results****. The Difficulty Class (DC) for each listed ability check is 10. If the total of the d20 and its modifiers equals or exceeds 10, the check succeeds. On a 9 or lower, it fails. In either case, the area's description tells you what happens.*

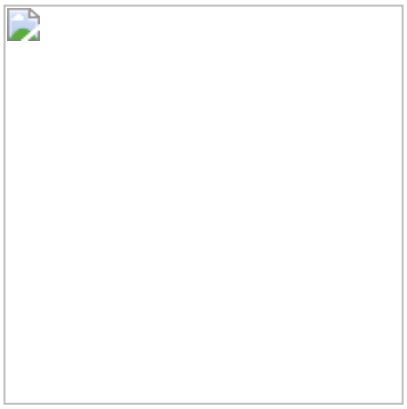
- ***Example.*** *A Rogue tries to deceive the kobold with a Charisma (Deception) check. The player rolls a d20 and adds their character's Deception modifier (+4) for a total of 14. The check succeeds—the kobold believes the lie!*

A3: Centipedes' Den

> *This cave contains heaps of waste. Two giant centipedes skitter about, picking at the refuse.*

Two **Giant Centipedes** scavenge this cave. The centipedes are Hostile toward all other creatures and fight anyone who enters their den.

The kobolds are afraid of the centipedes—a fact they report to any who mention the beasts. If the characters slay the centipedes and show proof to a kobold, this deed earns the kobold's respect, improving its attitude toward them to Friendly.



Combat. *Though the characters can avoid combat elsewhere, the centipedes in area A3 fight them on sight. Here's how that might play out:*

- ***Describe the Scene****. Read the boxed text aloud. Then say, "Roll Initiative!" to signal the start of combat. Roll once for both centipedes, which act on the same turn.*
- ***Players React****. In combat, the characters and the centipedes act on their turns. Use the "Combat" section in the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) to run this encounter.*

A4: Common Area

> *This common area contains straw beds and a pile of junk. Five small, bipedal reptiles pace about the cave, arguing loudly.*

Five **Kobold Warriors** are trying to decide whether to keep the wyrmling or return it to its nest. They cease bickering when they notice the characters. The kobolds' initial attitude is Indifferent. If they learn the characters eliminated the guard in area A2, these kobolds are Hostile.

Treasure. Stashed in the junk pile are 25 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

> ***Treasure.*** *Treasure entries like this describe loot in an area. Usually, treasure consists of Gold Pieces (GP), magic items, or both.*

> *Whenever a player character finds gold, give that player Gold Pieces equal to the listed value, which is tracked on their character sheet. For magic items, roll once on the Magic Items table in appendix A (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.*

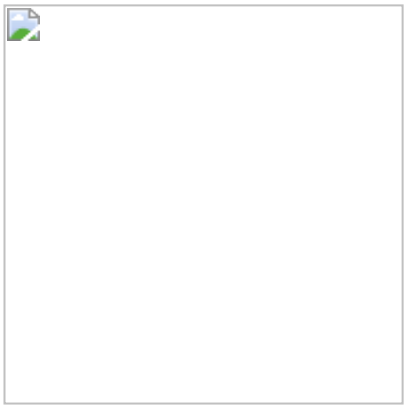
> - ***Share the Wealth.*** *Encourage players to split treasure among the characters as evenly as possible. This is especially important for magic items, which are seldom awarded.*
> - ***Spending Gold Pieces.*** *Opportunities to spend gold in the Caves of Chaos are rare, but the Keep on the Borderlands contains plenty of goods and services available for purchase.*

A5: Larder

The stone door to this room is ajar. A persistent, ear-splitting cry emanates within. When the characters enter, read the following text aloud:

> > *This chamber contains barrels and sacks of dried and salted meats, grains, and vegetables. A dragon wyrmling with copper scales sits on a scant pile of coins and eggshell fragments in the corner of the room, shrieking endlessly.*
> >
> > *Two small, bipedal reptiles with worried expressions deposit handfuls of coins and junk at the creature's feet.*

Two **Kobold Warriors** attempt to comfort the crying **Copper Dragon Wyrmling** by adding treasure to its meager hoard. It isn't going well. The kobolds and the wyrmling are Indifferent toward all other creatures.



Soothing the Wyrmling. The wyrmling knows the kobolds aren't its parents, but it doesn't know where its nest is. The wyrmling doesn't yet have a name, which only compounds its misery.

As an Influence action, a character can try to calm the wyrmling and make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 10 Charisma (Deception). The character mollifies the wyrmling with a promise they don't intend to keep.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion). The character assures the wyrmling they're here to help.

DC 10 Charisma (Performance). The character soothes the wyrmling with a gentle lullaby.

A character who offers the wyrmling at least 10 GP has Advantage on this check. On a successful check, the wyrmling stops wailing, and its attitude improves to Friendly, as do the attitudes of all kobolds in the cave. The wyrmling then asks the characters whether it should stay with the kobolds or return home. The kobolds honor the wyrmling's choice, which corresponds with the characters' recommendation.

> ***Advantage/Disadvantage.*** *Sometimes a D20 Test is modified by special situations called Advantage and Disadvantage, which reflect positive and negative circumstances, respectively. See the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) for more on Advantage and Disadvantage.*

> *In area A5, if a character gives the dragon wyrmling at least 10 GP, that character has Advantage on an ability check to influence it.*

- ***Roll Two D20s.*** *When a roll has either Advantage or Disadvantage, roll a second d20 when you make the roll. Use the higher of the two rolls if you have Advantage, and use the lower roll if you have Disadvantage.*
- ***Example.*** *A Cleric gives the wyrmling 10 GP and then hums a tune to soothe it. The Cleric takes the Influence action and makes a Charisma (Performance) check with Advantage. The player rolls two d20s: 15 and 6. The player uses the higher roll and adds the Cleric's Performance modifier (+2) for a total of 17, which exceeds the DC of 10, and the check succeeds. If the check had been made with Disadvantage instead, the total of 8 would've failed.*

On a failed check, or if the characters try to steal from its meager hoard, the wyrmling fights. The cowardly kobolds abstain from battle. If the wyrmling defeats all the characters, they wake up 1 hour later outside the cave with 1 Hit Point each.

Saving Throws. *The wyrmling's Acid Breath action (see the wyrmling's stat block) prompts another type of D20 Test: a saving throw. Saving throws—also called saves—are named for the ability modifiers they use; in this case, characters use Dexterity to dodge an exhalation of acid. If a character is targeted by this effect, the player rolls a d20 and adds the character's Dexterity save modifier. A save's result is detailed in the effect that caused it.*

Treasure. The wyrmling's hoard consists of 25 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

B: Mephit Lair

Sturdy fortifications and clean water make this abandoned subterranean outpost an appealing den for thieves and monsters. Before the prior inhabitants left, they stored some enticing treasure here, guarded by a monstrous shape-shifter called a mimic. Since then, a trio of impish elementals and kuo-toa fanatics have made the cave their home.

You can add monsters, such as **Giant Centipedes**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can remove the **Kuo-Toa Marauders** or one of the **Steam Mephits** to make it easier and shorter.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Walls of mortared stone and cracked flagstone tiles form the interior of this cave, creating the impression of a subterranean fortress. Water trickles steadily somewhere in the cave.*

Water from the broken fountain in area B7 floods a chamber to the south (area B5). The dribbling fountain can be heard throughout the cave.

Mephit Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Door.** The door to area B8 is made from reinforced wood; it's closed but unlocked.
- **Environment.** The cave's walls are made of smooth, mortared stones with patches of unworked rock.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Mephit Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map B.

Map B: Mephit Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

B1: Entrance

> *An arrow slit interrupts the wall at this junction.*

The arrow slit is linked to area B2. If the characters enter the cave carrying a source of Bright Light or talking loudly, the slit begins to vent harmless steam as the **Steam Mephit** in that area approaches the opening and observes them. The slit provides the mephit with Three-Quarters Cover.

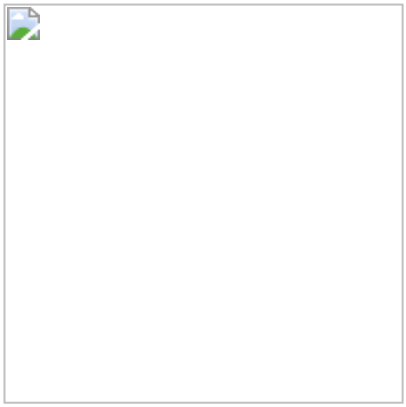
B2: Balistraria

> *Steam fills this stone alcove, which looks out to the cave's entrance through a thin vertical slit.*

Defenders can watch the cave entrance from this alcove. A **Steam Mephit** flits about the area. It ostensibly watches for intruders coming from area B1, but it is bored and barely fulfilling its duties. The mephit is Indifferent but defends itself in combat.

If the mephit sees the characters enter the cave, it peers at them through the arrow slit and whistles like a teakettle to entice them to approach. If a character comes within 5 feet of the slit, the mephit exhales a 15-foot Cone of harmless steam and snickers at the character's reaction.

If the characters approach from the other side of the alcove, the mephit feigns innocence. It then tries to lure them to the old barrack (area B6) to be ambushed by the kuo-toa that lurk there.



B3: Prison Cells

Four cold cells line one wall of this chamber. Floor-to-ceiling iron bars partition the cells, which are unlocked and devoid of valuables. Two of the cells contain unidentifiable skeletal remains draped in moth-eaten rags.

B4: Old Armory

Cobwebbed weapon racks and rusty suits of armor lie scattered about this armory. None of the items is salvageable.

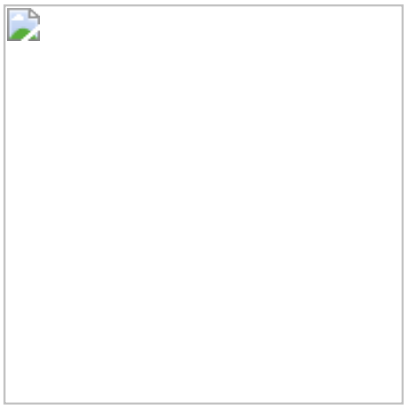
B5: Flooded Room

> > *Water trickles into this spacious chamber from the north, forming a shallow pool. A small, winged creature made of hissing steam zips above the water in pursuit of a tiny croaking frog.*

Warm spring water streams into this room from area B7, forming a 1-foot-deep pool here. The pool is Difficult Terrain.

A **Steam Mephit** toys with a panicked frog in the water. The mephit is initially Indifferent toward the characters and remains that way unless they try to spoil its fun, which provokes the hot-tempered elemental to start combat. If a fight breaks out, the mephits in areas B2 and B7 quickly join the fray.

B6: Old Barrack



> *Ruined cots are heaped near the corners of this chamber, which features a natural ceiling. Two slimy humanoids with fishlike heads use spears to carve strange symbols on the cave walls.*

Two **Kuo-Toa Marauders** scrawl rupestrian gibberish on the walls of this run-down barrack. The Hostile kuo-toa fight the characters on sight, hoping to capture them alive and hold them in the prison cells (area B3). The room is otherwise empty.

B7: Broken Fountain

> *A badly broken stone fountain burbles in an alcove at the upper end of this sloped hallway.*

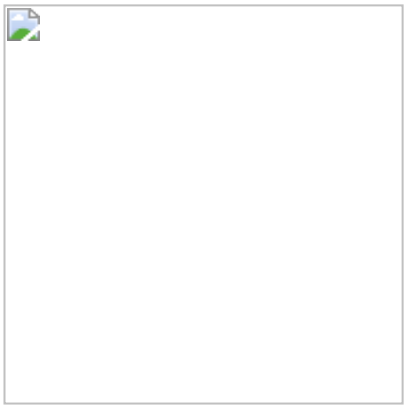
Warm water bubbles from an underground spring into this ruined fountain. It flows south and pools in area B5.

Unless it was drawn elsewhere, a **Steam Mephit** lurks near the fountain, quietly mesmerized by the fountain's burbling. The mephit behaves similarly to the one in area B5, starting combat with the characters if disturbed. If a fight breaks out, the mephits in areas B2 and B5 join the fray.

B8: Vault

> *Dust coats this plundered vault, which is mostly empty. Two chests rest along the east wall.*

One of the chests is fake—a hungry **Mimic** has altered its shape to resemble the mundane container beside it. The mimic ambushes any creature that comes within 5 feet of it. It fights to the death.



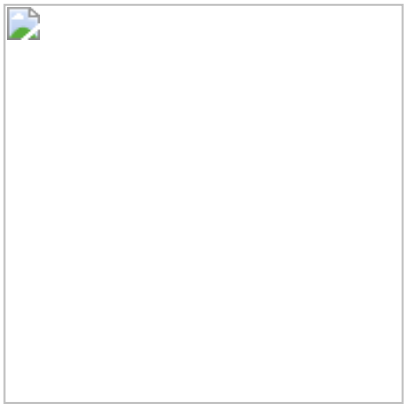
Treasure. The real treasure chest contains 150 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

C: Nothic Lair

An evil wizard used these caverns to conduct foul experiments. The last of these destroyed the wizard's memory and transformed her into a cyclopic monster called a nothic. By studying arcane secrets, the nothic hopes to regain its memories and attain enough power to rule the Caves of Chaos.

Recently, a carrion crawler slithered into the cave and interrupted the nothic's research. Unwilling to confront the creature directly, the nothic is now trapped in its laboratory as it concocts a solution.

You can add monsters, such as **Stirges**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can remove the **Animated Flying Sword** to make it easier and shorter.



Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *The entrance to this cave is flanked by carved stone blocks etched with strange geometric patterns. You hear sounds of something scuttling across the stone inside the cave.*

The sounds come from the carrion crawler in the hallway (area C4).

Nothic Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Doors.** Doors throughout the cave are made of reinforced wood with iron hinges.
- **Environment.** The cave has mostly smooth stone walls with patches of unworked stone. The smooth stone walls are carved with geometric patterns and indecipherable runes.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision or other means to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Nothic Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map C.

Map C: Nothic Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

C1: Entrance

> *The symbols etched into the entrance extend into the cave.*

A character who examines the symbols and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes them as arcane runes designed to ward the cave against magical scrutiny. The runes are unfinished, so they have no effect.

C2: Ritual Chamber

> *Half-melted black candles surround a circle of arcane symbols scribed on the floor in white chalk. Scorch marks mar the floor inside the circle.*

A character who examines the circle and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check determines it was the site of an arcane ritual that went horribly wrong.

C3: Library

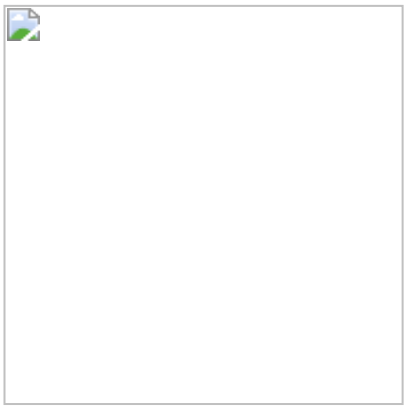
> *Moldy leather-bound books line stone shelves carved into the walls of this underground library. A tome with an iron-plated cover lies open on a table near the north wall.*

The nothic occasionally performs research here.

Books. The books in this room cover topics related to alchemy, geometry, and metallurgy. They are hard to parse, and none of them are valuable to the characters.

Iron Tome. The open tome describes the Chaos Bell, a wicked bell said to attract monsters from near and far. The book claims the bell's toll can even wake the dead. According to the book, the bell can be destroyed only by submerging it in a sacred spring hidden in the forests of the Borderlands.

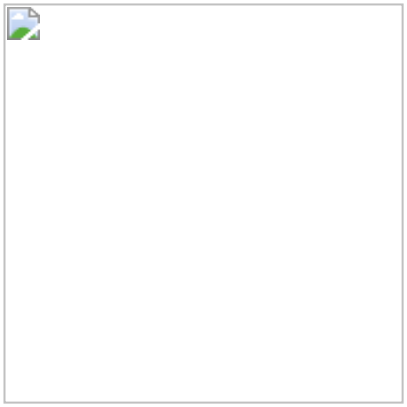
C4: Hallway



> *A massive, tentacled grub with dozens of legs creeps along the ceiling of this long hallway.*

A **Carrion Crawler** clings to the hall's ceiling. It is Hostile toward all other creatures and fights them on sight.

C5: Wizard's Laboratory



> *Esoteric apparatuses and strange reagents line worktables and shelves in this laboratory. A cyclopic creature paces about the room before a chalkboard. A floating sword guards the creature.*

A **Nothic** broods over the invader in the hallway (see area C4). Protecting the nothic is an **Animated Flying Sword** that obeys the nothic's commands. Both are initially Indifferent toward the characters.

Chalkboard. Scrawled on the chalkboard are a map of this cave and indecipherable formulas.

Eye for an Eye. The nothic wants to research in peace, which it can't do as long as the carrion crawler threatens its lair. If the characters don't fight the nothic, it asks them for help.

If the characters slay the carrion crawler, the nothic offers the party the treasure in the cell (area C6). If asked about the dead dwarf there, the nothic takes credit for thwarting the meddlesome thief.

Key. On a table is a key to the storage room (area C7). To swipe the key without the nothic noticing, a character must succeed on a DC 14 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check. On a failed check, the nothic and its sword start combat.

C6: Cell

> *Iron bars divide this chamber, forming a cell to the south. Flies buzz around a corpse sprawled on the floor of the cell.*

The cell is unlocked. Inside lies the rotting corpse of a dwarf explorer who came to the Caves of Chaos in search of riches but perished ten days ago. A character who examines the corpse and succeeds on a DC 10 Wisdom (Medicine) check deduces that the dwarf died from Necrotic damage.

Treasure. The dead explorer's belongings include 60 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

C7: Storage Room

The door to this room is locked. The key can be found in the laboratory (area C5). As a Utilize action, a character can pick the lock with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check using Thieves' Tools or force open the door with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

Treasure. An unlocked chest against the east wall contains 100 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

D: Goblin Lair

A violent band of goblin warriors lives in this cave. It's the goblin boss's birthday, and she demands a celebration! Engrossed in the revelry, the goblins ignore their recent captive: a dwarf named Vinx.

You can add monsters to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult. The goblins might have invited **Hobgoblin Warriors** from the adjacent cave (cave F) as party guests or bodyguards. To make the scenario easier and shorter, reduce the number of **Goblin Warriors**.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave E via the secret door in *area D5* (see *map D*); characters can also enter from cave F through the hallway west of *area D4*. If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> > *Torches illuminate this stinking cave. A horrendous racket of discordant voices echoes within. The voices appear to be singing—quite badly.*

The "music" emanates from the boss's room (area D4), where off-key goblins commemorate their leader in song. The singing continues for 1 minute, then ends with a din of celebratory yips.

Goblin Lair Features

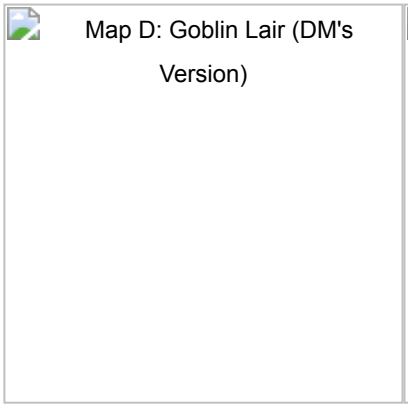
The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Surroundings.** The cave has walls of rough-hewn stone and a dirt floor. It stinks of old food and soiled clothes, which are strewn about the cave.

- **Doors and Secret Door.** Doors in the cave are made of rough wood. The secret door in *area D5* blends in with the surrounding wall. As a Search action, a character can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan that area for a secret door, noticing it on a successful check.
- **Lighting.** Torches in wall sconces throughout the cave fill it with Bright Light.

Goblin Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map D.

 Map D: Goblin Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

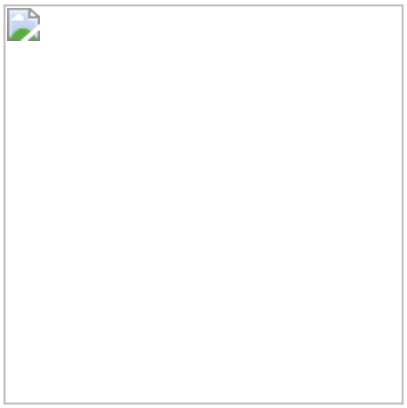
D1: Entrance

> *The walls here are daubed with crude paintings of grinning goblins with pointy hats. Scrawled above the art are the words, "hoppee birthday!"*

The goblins painted the celebratory drawings.

D2: Dead-End Tunnel

> *This tunnel leads to a dead end with some old barrels. An exasperated dwarf is tied up beside them. "A little help here?" she asks as she squirms.*



The captive is **Vinx**, a dwarf spelunker. Vinx came to this cave in search of a stolen family tapestry, but the goblins captured her. Vinx is Indifferent toward the characters and has the Restrained condition while bound.

Vinx assures the characters that she's a capable explorer who can hold her own in a fight, but some quests can't be completed alone. If they help her recover the tapestry, she promises a hefty reward.

The barrels are mostly filled with crooked spears and old arrows that are unusable.

Freeing Vinx. As an action, a character can untie Vinx or cut her bonds (no check required). If freed, Vinx gratefully accompanies the characters as they explore the cave and fights alongside them until they all reemerge in the valley.

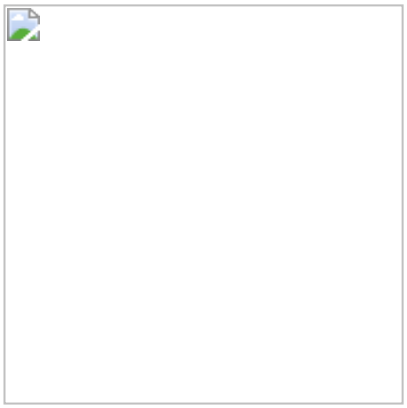
Treasure. Vinx stashed a magic item at the bottom of one of the barrels before she was captured; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item. If freed, Vinx discreetly fishes the item out of the barrel and keeps it on her person until the characters find her family's tapestry (see *area D4*).

D3: Common Room

> *Heaps of soiled bedding, tables, and stools are scattered around the room. Clumsily wrapped presents with tattered ribbons are piled on one table, along with a half-eaten cake that looks like it was dropped.*

These goblin gifts include a bag of assorted teeth, a moist wad of thoughtfully pre-chewed jerky, and a foul-smelling mushroom. The cake appears professionally baked but poorly handled.

D4: Boss's Room



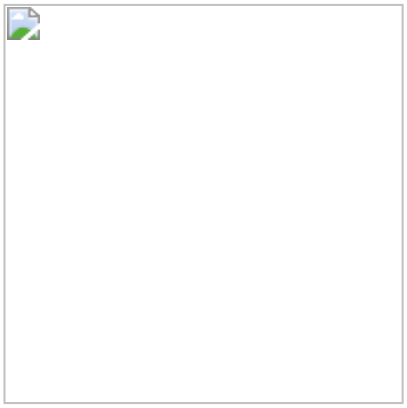
> *In this rowdy chamber, a bossy goblin with a party hat and a kazoo sits on a wooden throne with a lopsided cushion. Goblin celebrants with cake-stained faces dance below.*

A **Goblin Boss** and four **Goblin Warriors** are here celebrating the boss's birthday. The goblins are initially Hostile toward the characters.

When the goblins notice the characters, they stop dancing. Read or paraphrase the following text:

> *The goblin on the throne leaps to her feet and barks, "BREE-YARK! This is my party, and I don't remember inviting you!"*

The goblins brandish their weapons.



"Hoppee Birthday!" As an Influence action, a character can try to defuse the tension and make a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A character who offers the boss an impressive birthday present—such as 10 GP, a magic item, or one of the gifts from area D3—automatically succeeds on this check.

On a successful check, the goblins' attitudes improve to Indifferent, and the boss invites the characters to join her birthday celebration. On a failed check, the goblins fight the party crashers.

Treasure. Stashed under the throne's ragged cushion are a fine tapestry sewn with silver and gold threads and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item. The tapestry belongs to Vinx and is worth 90 GP.

If the characters give the tapestry to Vinx, she rewards them with the magic item from *area D2*. However, if she learns the characters intend to keep the tapestry, she hotly demands they return the family heirloom and fights them if they refuse.

D5: Webbed Cavern

> *Webs drape the western half of this musky cave.*

A **Giant Spider** lurks in a tunnel to the south. The Hostile spider ambushes all non-goblins in its den.

Webs. The webs are Difficult Terrain, but they aren't strong enough to restrain anyone. Each 10-foot-cube of webs has AC 10; HP 5; Vulnerability to Fire damage; and Immunity to Bludgeoning, Piercing, Poison, and Psychic damage.

E: Ogre Lair

An ogre mercenary named Oggdug recently formed an alliance with a red dragon wyrmling who aims to rule the Caves of Chaos. The dragon, Cindertooth, serves Oggdug as an attack dog and companion—for now. Cindertooth tolerates Oggdug so long as the ogre supplies him with gold and spoils for his growing hoard. Player characters might hire the ogre for a short time.

You can add monsters to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult. One or more **Goblin Warriors** or **Kobold Warriors** might be here soliciting the ogre's services. Conversely, you can remove the **Red Dragon Wyrmling** to make the scenario easier and shorter. Cindertooth might be away when the characters first explore this cave.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave D via the secret door in area E3 (see map E). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> *This large cave exudes a strong, sour odor. Half-gnawed hunks of meat from sloppily butchered and charred animals litter the area.*

The cave's occupants are responsible for the mess.

Ogre Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 15 feet high.
- **Environment.** The dirt floor of this natural cave is stained with blood from past battles.
- **Secret Door.** The secret door in area E3 blends in with the surrounding wall. As a Search action, a character can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan that area for a secret door, noticing it on a successful check. Oggdug knows about the door but doesn't use it due to its narrowness and the spider den on the other side (see cave D).
- **Lighting.** During the day, natural light provides Dim Light in the cave. At night, its denizens rely on Darkvision to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Map E: Ogre Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

Ogre Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map E.

E1: Entrance

> *Flies buzz around the rotting carcass of some unrecognizable beast outside the cave mouth.*

The carcass conceals a hidden snare trap. The trap is depicted on map E.

Snare Trap. This trap consists of bent saplings and a loop of gore-encrusted rope. A creature that moves, prods, or otherwise disturbs the meat must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or be hoisted 5 feet into the air. The hoisted creature has the Restrained condition until it gets free.

Rules for detecting, disabling, and escaping the trap are as follows:

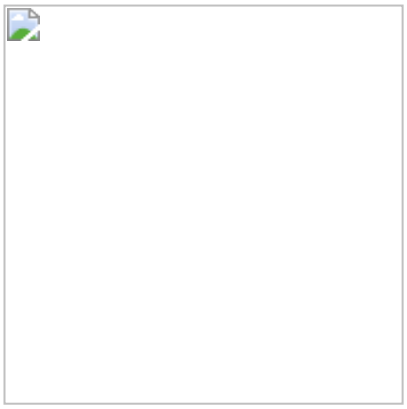
- **Detect and Disable.** As a Search action, a character can examine the carcass and make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, detecting the trap on a successful check. Once detected, the trap can be disabled by a

character who takes the Utilize action and succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check; failing this check triggers the trap.

- **Escaping the Trap.** As an action, a creature Restrained by the trap can free itself by cutting the rope or by slipping out with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check.

If the trap is triggered, the noise alerts the ogre in area E2, who stomps out of the cave to investigate. The encounter in that area then occurs here.

E2: Ogre Mercenary's Den



> *Thick, lumpy bearskins cover the floor of this cave, but they're hardly visible beneath the hulking, potbellied giant that lies atop it, picking his teeth with a rusty sword.*

Oggdug, an **Ogre**, reclines on the bearskins. He is initially Hostile toward the characters, but if they approach peacefully, Oggdug assumes they must want to hire him for mercenary work. He tells the characters to cough up some coin or get out, threatening to clobber any who refuse.

A character can shift Oggdug's attitude from Hostile to Indifferent by hiring him (see the "Hiring the Ogre" section below) or taking the Influence action to make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 10 Charisma (Deception). The character dupes the ogre with a clever ruse or outlandish lie.

DC 10 Charisma (Performance). The character amuses the ogre with a small performance, such as a dance or magic trick.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces the ogre the party means him no harm.

On a failed check, or if a character tries to undercut Oggdug's price, the ogre starts combat, grumbling that the characters are "puny cheapskates." If the ogre drops to half his Hit Points or fewer, he calls to Cindertooth in area E3 for aid.

Hiring the Ogre. Oggdug is accustomed to other denizens of the Caves of Chaos hiring him for mercenary work. His rate is 50 GP per job, but first-time customers get a 50 percent discount (25 GP). Cindertooth gets half of Oggdug's earnings.

If the party pays the ogre his asking price, he joins them for a single fight in any of the caves except for the two caves he says are off-limits (cave G and cave K). After the fight, the ogre returns to this cave unless the characters pay him for another bout. The second time the characters hire the ogre and every time afterward, his rate is 50 GP per job.

"Oggdug Sad." If a character asks Oggdug about either of the off-limits caves, the ogre sighs mournfully and tells them his tragic story. Oggdug once shared this cave with his older brother, Zurf, before Zurf was killed by an owlbear near its den (cave G). Cultists later animated Zurf's half-eaten corpse, which now guards the cultists' lair (cave K). Oggdug now shuns both caves.

Treasure. The filthy bearskins conceal a pile of equine bones, a wheel of cheese, a keg of brandy, and a lumpy sack containing 60 GP. The ogre warns anyone who goes near the bearskins that he'll "give 'em a good stomping" if they continue snooping. He makes good on his threat.

E3: Dragon's Den

> *This spacious cavern contains battered armor, broken weapons, casks of ale and mead, and other supplies. A red-scaled dragon glowers down at the chamber from a rocky perch ten feet above the cave floor.*

Cindertooth, a **Red Dragon Wyrmling**, dwells in this cavern. The dragon is Hostile toward creatures other than Oggdug.

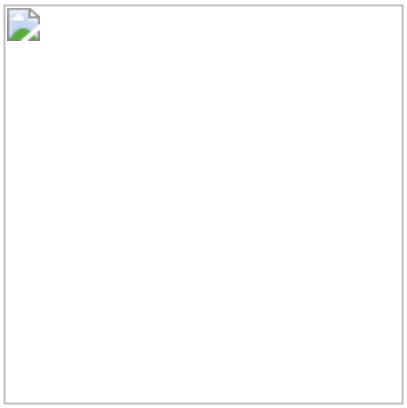
When Cindertooth notices the characters, he flies down to scold them for trespassing. He demands each character pay him 10 GP as tribute or face his fiery wrath.

A character can attempt to avoid Cindertooth's toll by making a DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion) check. Characters who appeal to the dragon's ego through flattery have Advantage on this check. On a successful check, or if the character pays Cindertooth, the dragon tells them to leave this cave while they still can. On a failed check, or if the characters don't heed Cindertooth's warning, he starts combat.

Fighting Cindertooth. Combat here draws the attention of Oggdug, who stomps into this area and joins the fray. At your discretion, the ogre might fight alongside the characters in hopes of claiming the dragon's hoard for himself.

Treasure. The provisions and supplies in this room were taken from travelers and adventurers who crossed paths with Cindertooth. All the equipment here was ruined beyond repair in battle.

Amid the dragon's spoils are 50 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item. The dragon fights any creature that steals from its hoard.



F: Hobgoblin Lair

Hobgoblins quartered in this cave recently suffered heavy losses, including their former captain. Only four hobgoblins remain. They've fortified their outpost and drafted a voracious ooze to guard it.

You can add monsters, such as allied **Goblin Warriors**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can remove some monsters to make it easier and shorter. One or two **Hobgoblin Warriors** might be out on a patrol elsewhere.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave D via the hall east of area F2 (see *map F*). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> > *A stout, ironbound door seals this cave mouth. Bleached skulls line niches outside the entrance. A bloodstained sign on the door reads, "Come in! We'd like to have you for dinner!"*

The hobgoblins don't eat people, but they use the sign's gruesome implication to scare intruders.

Hobgoblin Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Doors.** The cave's doors are made of oak planks bound with iron. They are unlocked.
- **Environment.** The cave is carved from stone. It is scrupulously clean. The hobgoblins keep their areas tidy, and the gelatinous cube in area F2 sweeps up anything in its path.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision or other means to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Hobgoblin Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map F.

Map F: Hobgoblin Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

F1: Entrance

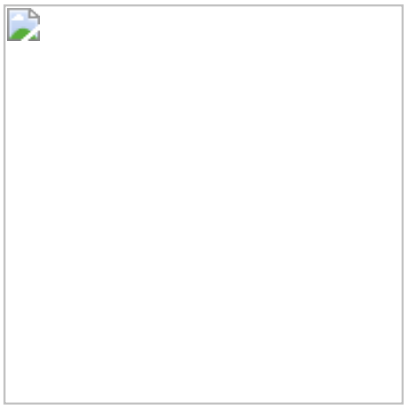
> *An armored goblinoid warrior with red-orange skin and a bow stands behind a rickety barricade of interlocking spears. "Halt!" she commands. "State your business or face the wrath of our battalion—thirty hobgoblins strong."*

A **Hobgoblin Warrior** stands guard behind a pair of spear barricades (see the "Spear Barricade" sidebar). The sentry is Hostile toward intruders and tries to delay them through interrogation until the gelatinous cube in area F2 arrives here to dispatch them.

The sentry is lying about how many hobgoblins remain. Weakened by their recent loss, the hobgoblins fear marauders and try to present a strong front. A character who doubts the sentry can take the Search action and make a DC 13 Wisdom (Insight) check; a successful check discerns the lie.

As an Influence action, a character can try to pacify the sentry and make a DC 14 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A character who saw through her previous lie has Advantage on this check. On a successful check, the sentry's attitude improves to Indifferent, and she stands down; she warns the characters about the gelatinous cube's impending arrival but doesn't let them past the barricades. On a failed check, the sentry commands the characters to leave at once or be destroyed.

Fighting the Hobgoblins. In combat, the sentry remains behind the barricades. If the characters breach either barricade, the sentry uses her next action to blow a war horn, alerting the other hobgoblins in the cave. She then retreats to the barrack (area F4), where she and the rest of the hobgoblins make their last stand.



Spear Barricade

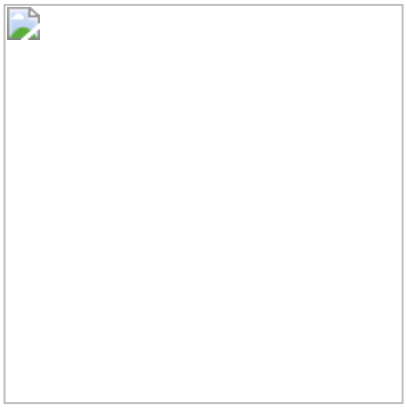
A spear barricade is a bristly cube of interlocking spears. Each spear barricade has these rules.

Difficult Terrain. *The barricade is Difficult Terrain. A creature that moves through the barricade takes 1d6 Piercing damage.*

Provides Half Cover. *A creature behind the barricade has Half Cover.*

Breaking the Barricade. *The barricade has AC 15, HP 4, and Immunity to Poison and Psychic damage. If reduced to 0 Hit Points, the barricade is destroyed.*

F2: Cube Route



> *This smooth tunnel forms a rectangular circuit.*

A hungry **Gelatinous Cube** slowly loops counterclockwise through this part of the cave. It takes about 1 minute for it to complete a lap. The cube occasionally meanders down the eastern tunnel toward cave D and back again, but it never crosses the spear barricades (see the "Spear Barricade" sidebar).

The cube is Hostile toward all other creatures and fights them on detection. Clever characters might be able to lure the cube out of the cave through the entrance to area F1, shutting the door behind them.

F3: Mess Hall

The hobgoblins dine in this mess hall. They erected a pair of spear barricades (see the "Spear Barricade" sidebar) to keep the gelatinous cube in area F2 out. The room contains nothing of value to the characters.

F4: Barrack

> *This chamber contains a dozen stiff-looking cots, but only four have seen recent use. A large iron strongbox sits against the east wall. A hobgoblin warrior, sword in hand, stands before it.*

The surviving hobgoblins lodge in this once-full barrack. A lone **Hobgoblin Warrior** fiercely defends what few valuables remain. He starts combat with the characters on sight and fights to the death.

If the hobgoblin sentry sounded the alarm in area F1, the two **Hobgoblin Warriors** from area F5 are also here, ready to intercept the characters.

Treasure. The chest includes stolen goods: fine furs worth 75 GP, a pouch containing 20 GP, and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

F5: Training Hall

> *This training hall holds bare weapon racks and four straw-stuffed targets painted with bullseyes.*
>
> *Two hobgoblin archers fire at the targets.*

Unless they were called elsewhere, two **Hobgoblin Warriors** train in this hall, which was stripped of its weapons during a raid. The hobgoblins are Hostile toward intruders and fight them on sight.

G: Shunned Caves

An owlbear—a frightening cross between a bear and a giant owl—lurks in this cave. Most other denizens of the valley give the cave a wide berth.

This cave is connected to cave K, a hotbed of activity for the Cult of Chaos, whose members venerate powers of disorder and destruction. The cult mainly operates in the adjacent cave, but as its ranks swell, cultists increasingly frequent this one. The owlbear is unaware of the cultists' presence.

You can add monsters, such as **Zombies**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can reduce the number of **Cultists** or **Gray Ooze Globs** to make it easier and shorter.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave K via the stairs south of area G6 (see *map G*). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> > *The stench of rot and wet stone issues from this natural cave. An unsettling screech and the sound of thick feathers ruffling echo within.*

The owlbear is moving restlessly in its den (area G5).

Shunned Cave Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 15 feet high.
- **Door.** The stone door to area G6 is ajar.
- **Environment.** The eastern half of this cave (areas G1–G5) has naturally formed spaces with wet walls and damp dirt floors. The western half of the cave (areas G6–G7) has walls made of cut stone blocks and floors made of cracked tiles.
- **Lighting.** Unless noted otherwise, the cave is unlit. Its denizens use Darkvision or other means to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Shunned Cave Locations

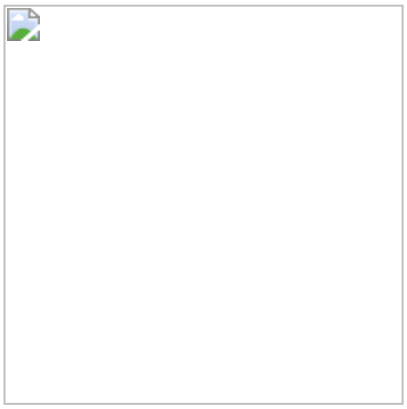
The following locations are keyed to map G.

Map G: Shunned Caves (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

G1: Entrance

Gnawed bones litter the ground near the cave mouth, and the stench of blood hangs in the air. The bones belong to the owlbear's victims, including animals, explorers, and other monsters. The bones bear indentations from the owlbear's toothed beak.

G2: Shallow Pool



> *Moisture drips from the ceiling of this damp cave, forming a shallow pool. Something glitters in the murky water.*

Two **Gray Ooze Globs** lurk in the pool, which is 2 feet deep and Difficult Terrain. The Hostile oozes fight any creature that comes within 5 feet of the water.

Treasure. The pool contains a jewel-encrusted goblet (worth 100 GP) and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

G3: Tight Passage

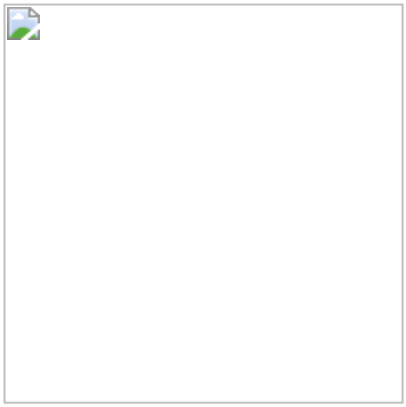
A narrow crack spans the cave wall here. The opening is only big enough for a Medium or smaller creature to fit through. Inside, the mangled corpse of a human explorer slumps against a stalagmite.

The owlbear in area G5 can't fit through the crack. If a character seeks refuge here, the owlbear loses interest and returns to its den.

G4: Smelly Refuse

This cave contains heaps of food scraps, rotting carcasses, and a scattering of halfling-size bird pellets composed of fur and regurgitated bones.

G5: Owlbear Den



> *A monstrous creature with a thick, shaggy hide and a feathered, owllike head paces aggressively in this den between nests formed from damp leaves and bloodstained branches.*

A territorial **Owlbear** lairs in this den. The Hostile owlbear fights all other creatures on sight.

Ledge. At the chamber's south end, a ledge 10 feet above the floor marks the entrance to a tunnel to areas G6 and G7. To climb the cave's slippery walls to reach the ledge, a character must succeed on a DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check. The owlbear doesn't pursue characters beyond the ledge.

G6: Cult Barrack

> *These cult quarters contain beds, a table, and several chairs. Tapestries on the walls depict evil creatures and obscene rituals. Four humans in hooded red robes recline on the beds.*

Torches in wall sconces fill this room with Bright Light. Four **Cultists** relax in these quarters for the Cult of Chaos. They are nonchalantly discussing the finer points of mayhem, torture, and other cruelties.

The cultists are Hostile toward intruders not garbed in their cult's attire and eagerly inflict violence on nonbelievers. As an Influence action, a character can try to de-escalate the situation and make one of the following ability checks (with Advantage if the character is dressed like a member of the Cult of Chaos). Consider these examples:

DC 13 Charisma (Deception). The character deceives the cultists with a lie, such as pretending to be a fellow cultist or an aspiring member.

DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces the cultists that it is in both parties' interests not to fight.

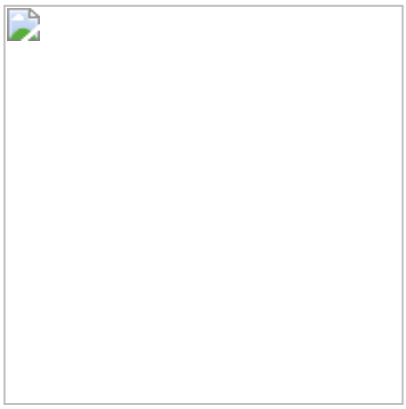
On a successful check, the cultists' attitudes improve to Indifferent. Otherwise, the cultists fight.

Treasure. Footlockers under four of the beds contain the cultists' belongings. Each contains 5 GP, a few worthless personal effects, and a *Cultist's Robe*, which the characters can also take from cultists defeated here.

G7: Crypt

> *Damp stairs descend to this musty crypt. A closed stone sarcophagus sits at the north end.*

A Hostile **Wight Lifedrinker** rests in the sarcophagus. The monster was once a cult leader who was so wicked in life that when he died, he rose as a cruel undead warrior. As an action, a character can pry open the lid of the sarcophagus, at which point the wight springs forth and fights.



Treasure. The sarcophagus holds one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

H: Bugbear Lair

This cave recently came under the control of three belligerent bugbears and the goblin stooges they've cowed into their service. The bugbears are plotting an assault on the Keep on the Borderlands. They dream of destroying the keep and looting its riches.

You can add another **Bugbear Warrior** to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can remove one or more of them to make it easier and shorter.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave I via the the secret door in area H5 (see *map H*). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> *A tunnel of rough stone is tucked behind several bushes. Within, you hear two deep voices in a heated argument. The conversation is unintelligible at this range.*

The voices belong to a pair of bugbears quarreling in the war room (area H2).

Bugbear Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Doors and Secret Doors.** The doors in this cave are made of sturdy wood planks. The secret door in area H5 blends in with the surrounding wall. As a Search action, a character can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan that area for a secret door, noticing it on a successful check.
- **Environment.** The walls are made of rough-hewn stone in some places and neat-fitting stone blocks in others. Stone tiles cover the floor.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Bugbear Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map H.

Map H: Bugbear Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

H1: Entrance

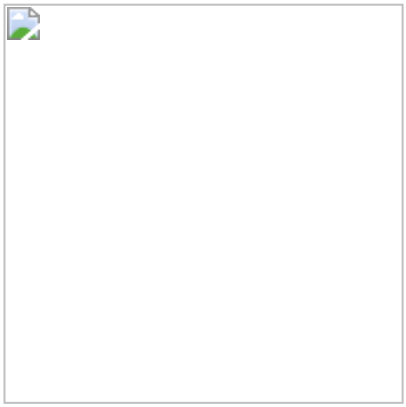
Just inside the cave, a tunnel branches east and west.

H2: War Room

The door to this makeshift war room is ajar, allowing the characters to hear two gruff voices bickering inside. When the characters enter or peek inside, read or paraphrase the following text:

> *This room contains an old table and four upright logs. A poorly drawn map of the Borderlands covers the table. Two tall, furry goblinoids hunch over the map, arguing with each other.*

Two **Bugbear Warriors** squabble about how best to infiltrate the keep. One asserts that a stealthy approach would be best, while the other insists on a direct assault aided by a local ogre mercenary (see cave E). The Hostile bugbears fight the characters on sight and can't be bargained with.



H3: Stairway

> *Stairs ascend north. At the top of the stairs is a heavy log the width of the stairway. Two goblins stand guard on a landing halfway up the stairs.*

These two **Goblin Warriors** are Hostile toward the characters. When the goblins detect an intruder to the south, roll Initiative.

On the goblins' turn, they attempt to scramble up the stairs and activate the rolling log trap (detailed below). The goblins then fight the characters.

Rolling Log Trap. This 10-foot-long log rolls down an incline, flattening creatures in its path.

As an action, a creature within 5 feet of the stationary log can push it down the stairs. The log tumbles down the incline in a straight line. Each creature in the log's path must make a DC 13 Dexterity saving throw. On a failed save, the creature takes 2d6 Bludgeoning damage and has the Prone condition. On a successful save, the creature takes half as much damage only.

H4: Trophy Room

> *The stuffed heads of deer, wolves, and other beasts are mounted on the walls of this room, as are a few humanoid heads with ghastly expressions. Skulls are piled in the northwest corner.*

Among the trophies are a number of empty mounts equal to the characters in the party—a grim omen of what could happen if they're defeated in this cave.

Treasure. The skulls hide a purse containing 10 GP.

H5: Hall

> *Musty animal furs serve as beds in this stark hall, where a furry brute berates two smaller, squeaky-voiced goblin subordinates.*

A **Bugbear Warrior**—the self-proclaimed boss of the cave—scolds two **Goblin Warriors** for sleeping on the job. When they notice the characters, the bugbear commands the goblins to fight and joins them in battle. The bugbear is Hostile toward the party, while the goblins are Indifferent.

Swaying the Goblins. These fickle goblins, Gargle and Yams, were recently recruited and don't like being yelled at.

As an Influence action, a character can try to shake the goblins' loyalty and make one of the following checks (with Advantage if the party already defeated the bugbear). Consider these examples:

DC 10 Charisma (Deception). The character tricks the goblins into believing the party now commands the cave.

DC 11 Charisma (Intimidation). The character scares the goblins into fearing for their lives.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces the goblins the party means them no harm.

On a successful check, the goblins' attitudes improve to Friendly. In exchange for a bribe of at least 2 GP, the goblins also help the characters defeat any remaining bugbears in the cave and tell the characters about the secret door in this area, though the goblins don't know what lies on the other side.

Treasure. Scattered among the furs on the floor are 25 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

H6: Boss's Chamber

A heap of thick animal furs forms a soft bed in this room, where the bugbear boss in area H5 sleeps.

Treasure. Stashed in the furs are 25 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

I: Minotaur Lair

A bloodthirsty minotaur rules this cave. A servant of *Baphomet*—a demon lord who endorses bloodshed and cruelty—the minotaur feasts on adventurers and monsters alike. It stalks its lair, huffing in bestial rage.

The minotaur's only companions are the vermin that scavenge its grisly leftovers. Deprived of recent visitors to its cave, the minotaur hungers for new playthings to hunt.

You can add monsters to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult. One or more **Bandits** might be here searching for hidden treasure. Conversely, you can reduce the number of **Stirges** to make the scenario easier and shorter.

Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave H via the secret door in area I3 (see *map I*). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> > *The entrance to this cave is a gaping maw of crumbling gray bricks. A low bellow rumbles within, causing dirt to trickle from the roof of the cave mouth.*

Minotaur Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 15 feet high.
- **Environment.** The cave walls are made of hard-packed dirt reinforced with crumbling pillars and brickwork. Crushed bones lie scattered about the dirt floor.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision or other means to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.
- **Secret Doors.** The secret doors in areas I3 and I4 blend in with their surroundings. As a Search action, a character in either of those areas can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to scan the area for a secret

door, noticing it on a successful check.

Minotaur Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map I.

Map I: Minotaur Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

I1: Entrance

> *Bones litter the furrowed dirt around the cave mouth.*

Pressed into the dirt are the broken bones of the minotaur's past victims—unlucky goblins, kobolds, and explorers who stumbled on the monster's lair.

Hoof Tracks. A character who inspects the area and succeeds on a DC 11 Wisdom (Survival) check notices hoof tracks left by a hulking, bipedal creature. The tracks lead west.

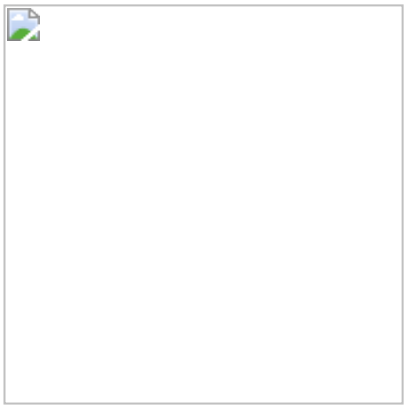
I2: Stirge Lair

> *The floor of this bloodstained cavern is strewn with small animal bones and the shriveled-up carcasses of cave-dwelling bats and rodents. A dim orange glow emanates from the north.*

Three **Stirges** hang asleep from the ceiling. These flying pests subsist on a diet of fresh blood. The stirges avoid the minotaur, but they are Hostile toward all other creatures.

Bright Light or any noise louder than a whisper wakes the stirges, which then start combat. The light from the fire beetles in area I3 is visible from here but is too dim to awaken the stirges. In combat, the stirges gorge themselves until they've drunk the characters dry.

I3: Fire Beetle Sanctuary

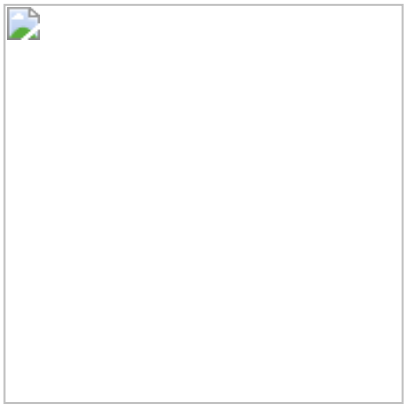


> *Old bricks reinforce the walls of this dirt cave. The cave contains two beetles, each as big as a dog and glowing with warm orange light. The beetles search the dirt floor for grubs.*

Two **Giant Fire Beetles** scrape up the dirt in search of tasty morsels. The beetles keep a safe distance from the minotaur and defend themselves if necessary. They are Indifferent toward the characters.

Taming the Beetles. As an Influence action, a character can make a DC 12 Wisdom (Animal Handling) check to tame a fire beetle. A character who waves a light source at the beetle has Advantage on this check. On a successful check, the beetle becomes Friendly toward the character and follows them throughout this cave, warmly illuminating their surroundings. While accompanied in this way, the character has Advantage on checks to notice secret doors. The beetles don't leave cave I.

I4: Minotaur Maze



> *Thick columns hewn from brick and dirt form tunnels in this labyrinthine cave. A jumble of overlapping hoofprints cover the blood-speckled dirt floor, and scratches mar the walls.*

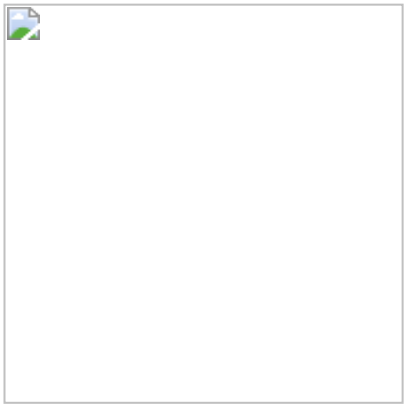
A Hostile **Minotaur of Baphomet** prowls amid the columns, stamping its hooves in the dirt and sharpening its horns on the walls. The minotaur charges the characters on sight and fights to the death. No amount of pleading, persuasion, or deceit can slake its bloodlust.

I5: Secret Spoils

> > *A wooden chest sits on the floor of this chamber.*

The chest was placed here by bandits who used this cave as a hideout until the minotaur arrived and slew them all.

Treasure. The chest contains 120 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.



J: Gnoll Lair

Evil gnolls—tall, shaggy fiends with hyenoid heads—have turned this abandoned shrine into their lair. The gnolls heard rumors that treasure is hidden somewhere in this cave, but they've been unable to find it due to an illusion placed by a long-dead mage. Vicious and hot-tempered, the gnolls have little patience for those who interrupt their search.

You can add monsters to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult. One or more **Bugbear Warriors** might have formed a tenuous alliance with the gnolls. Conversely, you can reduce the number of **Gnoll Warriors** to make the scenario easier and shorter.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *All is quiet outside the yawning mouth of this natural cave, at the back of which you can just make out a pair of featureless stone doors.*

Gnoll Lair Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 10 feet high.
- **Doors.** The doors to area J2 are made of stone.
- **Environment.** Past its entrance, the cave's natural rock gives way to crumbling stone blocks and flagstone tiles. Its walls are decorated with painted motifs of grinning demons and marching skeletons.
- **Lighting.** The cave is unlit, and its denizens rely on Darkvision to see. Area descriptions assume the characters have a light source or other means of seeing in Darkness.

Gnoll Lair Locations

The following locations are keyed to map J.

Map J: Gnoll Lair (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

J1: Entrance

> *Set into the west wall of this natural cavern is a stone double door that is partly open. Bestial, high-pitched laughter echoes within.*

The gnolls rigged the door with a makeshift alarm.

- **Door Alarm.** This simple alarm consists of armor scraps and rusty weapons balanced atop the partly open double door. Moving either door triggers the trap, the rules for which are as follows:

- **Avoiding the Trap.** A Medium or smaller creature can slip through the gap between the doors with a successful DC 13 Dexterity (Acrobatics) check; failing this check triggers the trap.
- **Detect and Disable.** As a Search action, a character can examine the door and make a DC 13 Wisdom (Perception) check, detecting the trap on a successful check. Once detected, the trap can be disabled by a character who takes the Utilize action and succeeds on a DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check; failing this check triggers the trap.
- **Triggering the Trap.** If the door is moved, the scraps clatter to the ground. The noise alerts all the gnolls in the cave, who cackle as they rush to dispatch intruders.

J2: Junk Pile

> *The center of this chamber's floor is piled with loose junk—broken ceremonial implements, rusty candlestick holders, and rotten rags.*

The gnolls piled objects here to sift through later.

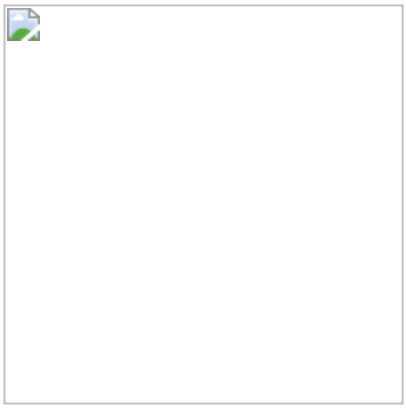
- **DM Tip!** If you increased this cave's difficulty, one or more Hostile **Bugbear Warriors** might be here rummaging through the junk.

J3: Old Chapel

> *This forlorn chapel is unfurnished, though a slightly depressed section of floor near the southeast wall suggests an altar or some other heavy object once rested there.*
>
> *Two tall warriors with mangy hides and hocked knees move about the chamber slowly, their hyena-like heads sniffing its walls.*

Two **Gnoll Warriors** scour this chamber for secret doors. The Hostile gnolls lunge at intruders in a frenzy. Combat in this chamber draws the attention of the gnolls in area J4, which quickly join the fray.

If the characters defeat all but one gnoll, the last of them surrenders. As an Influence action, a character can try to cow the gnoll into submission and make a DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation) check. On a successful check, the gnoll's attitude improves to Indifferent, and the gnoll reveals that its pack was searching for "a prize hidden in the mouth of a laughing fiend." On a failed check, the gnoll flees without divulging any information.



J4: Shrine of the Laughing Devil

> *A stone dais spans much of the south wall of this eerie shrine. Above the dais, a mosaic of black and red tiles depicts the face of a laughing devil whose forked tongue curls down to the dais.*

Unless drawn elsewhere, two **Gnoll Warriors** pace about this chamber, frustrated in their fruitless search for treasure. The Hostile gnolls behave similarly to the pair in area J3; combat in this chamber draws those gnolls here.

Illusory Wall. The laughing devil face is an illusory wall; it looks real to the eye but has no substance. A creature that touches the illusory wall discovers its true nature and can pass right through it.

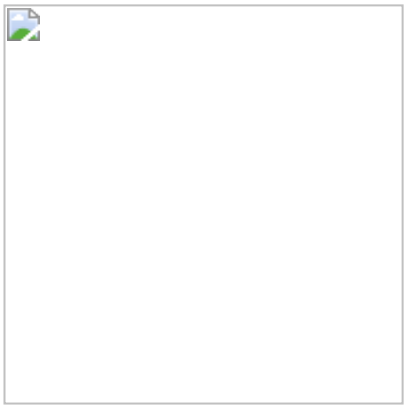
As a Study action, a character can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Investigation) check to discern the wall's true nature. On a successful check, the character recognizes the wall is a magical illusion.

J5: Hidden Crypt

> *The devil's face ripples to reveal a dusty crypt. Ancient bones and rubble litter the tiled floor. An austere sarcophagus stands in each corner, and an ornate chest rests in the center of the room.*

Long ago, an evil mage reanimated the corpses of four explorers and commanded them to guard this crypt's treasure for all eternity. Entombed here are four **Zombies**, one in each sarcophagus.

If the characters touch any of the sarcophagi or the chest, the Hostile **zombies** push the lids off their containers and start combat, seeking to rend intruders limb from limb.



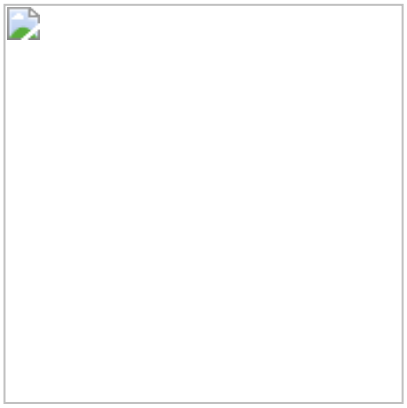
Treasure. Among the debris is the skeleton of a human thief. The thief's purse contains 15 GP and a large gemstone (worth 100 GP).

The chest is unlocked. It contains one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

K: Shrine of Evil Chaos

The Cult of Chaos performs evil rites in this cave, subtly drawing monsters to inhabit the Caves of Chaos and bring strife to the Borderlands. The current cult leader is Ivlis, the keep's former priest. Her cruel assistant, Narthus, is always here, and other cultists dwell close by (see cave G). Undead guardians defend the shrine and the Chaos Bell—the source of the cult's foul magic—at the shrine's heart.

You can add monsters, such as **Cultists**, to the cave to make this scenario longer and more difficult, or you can reduce the number of **Skeletons** or **Zombies** to make the scenario easier and shorter.



Getting Started

This cave is connected to cave G via the stairs east of area K5 (see *map K*). If the characters approach from outside the cave, read the following boxed text aloud to begin:

> > *A foul draft issues from this cave. Red strata intertwine with bulging black veins running through the hewn rock. A sinister crimson light dances deep in the cave.*

The stench issues from the rotting ogre in area K2.

Shrine Features

The cave has the following features:

- **Ceilings.** The cave's ceilings are 20 feet high.
- **Doors and Secret Doors.** Doors throughout this cave are made of heavy stone. The secret doors to area K8 blend in with their surroundings but are obvious from inside area K8. As a Search action, a character can make a DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check to examine the wall for a secret door, noticing it on a successful check.
- **Environment.** The cave instills a sense of unease in its visitors.
- **Lighting.** Unless otherwise noted, Bright Light from red-flamed wall sconces fills the cave's areas.

Shrine Locations

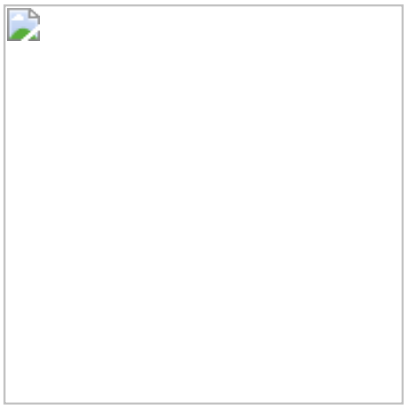
The following locations are keyed to map K.

Map K: Shrine Of Evil Chaos (DM's Version)	Without Tokens	Player Version

K1: Entrance

Shadows shroud this foreboding entrance.

K2: Guarded Hallway



> *The stench of death fills this hallway. Flies buzz around a groaning, slack-jawed giant backlit by red-flamed wall sconces.*

An **Ogre Zombie** conscripted by the cultists to guard their nefarious acts stands watch here, but the undead brute is easily fooled.

The ogre zombie lets members of the Cult of Chaos pass unscathed, but it is Hostile toward entrants not garbed in the cult's attire and pummels them on sight. The creature is Indifferent toward anyone wearing a *Cultist's Robe*.

K3: Chapel of Evil Chaos

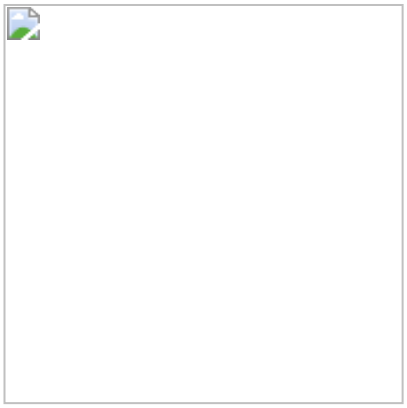
Four pillars support the domed roof of this empty chapel, where cultists conduct foul ceremonies.

- **DM Tip!** If you increased this cave's difficulty, two or more Hostile **Cultists** might be in the midst of an unholy ceremony here.

K4: Undead Barrack

Four **Zombies** shamble restlessly in this bare chamber. They fight any non-Undead not garbed in the cult's attire but are Indifferent toward anyone wearing a *Cultist's Robe*.

K5: Altar of Evil Chaos



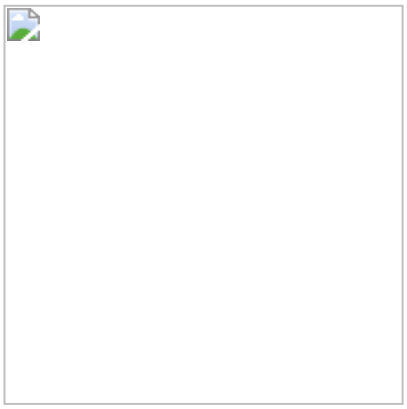
> *Violet draperies curtain this chamber. Three stone altars stand before a dais topped with five chairs: four rickety seats made of bone flanking a high-backed throne. An ominous, black iron bell hangs from a stand near the middle of the room.*
>
> *Piles of humanoid bones are arranged neatly near the north wall. A cultist flecks the bones with blood while intoning a demonic chant.*

Narthus chants evil litanies in this impious chamber. He is Hostile toward the characters, even if they're garbed in cult attire; Narthus screens every new cultist and knows his fellow cult members well.

If the characters interrupt the ritual, Narthus decries them as blasphemers and starts combat. On his turn, Narthus tries to ring the Chaos Bell, causing the bones to animate (see the "Chaos Bell" section).

Chaos Bell. Hanging from the stand is the Chaos Bell, a profane relic whose toll can wake the dead.

As a Bonus Action, a creature within 5 feet of the Chaos Bell can ring it, causing the bone piles to knit together and arise as four Hostile **Skeletons**. The tolling bell also summons the **Zombies** in area K4 to the fray. The skeletons and zombies obey Narthus's commands.



The Chaos Bell is all but indestructible. To destroy the bell and end its magic, the characters must submerge it in the sacred spring (see the "*Wilderness*" section). If a character removes the bell from its stand, give that player the Chaos Bell.

K6: Visitor's Chamber

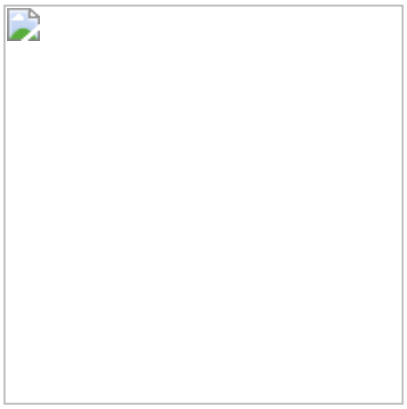
This room has comfortable chairs and a low table. Cult leaders interview potential new recruits here.

K7: Cult Leader's Room

> *This opulent chamber contains a large bed, desk, and wardrobe. A ghastly demon head is mounted on the wall. Kneeling before the demon is a human woman wearing bloodred robes and a spidery headdress.*

Ivlis, leader of the Cult of Chaos, lives here. Each day, she pays tribute to the severed demon head mounted on the wall, which she talks to when no one's around. Ivlis is Hostile toward the characters.

If confronted, Ivlis first tries to tempt the party with promises of untold riches and power, claiming all things are possible through the Cult of Chaos. She urges the characters to submit to the cult and become Undead. If they refuse, she fights.



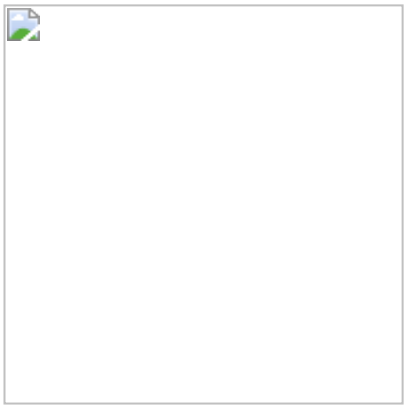
Fighting Ivlis. In combat, the sneering cult leader fights arrogantly and doesn't hold back. If reduced to 15 Hit Points or fewer, however, she tries to flee the cave through area K8 via the secret door. If Ivlis escapes, she attempts to revive the cult elsewhere.

Treasure. The demon head pivots to reveal a nook with 100 GP, a large red garnet (worth 100 GP), and two magic items; roll twice on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the items.

K8: Secret "Treasure"

This hidden room contains only a black iron chest. When a creature moves within 5 feet of the chest, it springs opens and spills 300 GP across the floor.

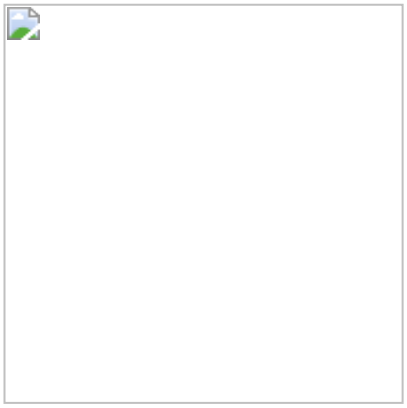
Treasure. The coins are cheap counterfeits intended to slow greedy pursuers. A cursory examination of the coins reveals them as fakes.



Keep on the Borderlands

Rising from rugged crags amid a harsh countryside, the Keep on the Borderlands is a bastion of peace amid an otherwise brutal wilderness. The keep's stalwart defenders protect their community from the forces of chaos that would revel in its fall.

DM Secret. This is for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. Unless text appears in a read-aloud box (like the one below), don't read it to the players.



Getting Started

The Keep on the Borderlands Map displays all the locations characters can visit in the keep. Share this map with your players.

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *You ascend a winding road through a forested and mountainous country. Ahead, atop a sheer-walled stone plateau, looms a great and stoic keep. Armed sentries along the outer wall peer down at you, ready to welcome new heroes or repel would-be invaders.*
>
> *Two armed guards stand at the front gate. They hail you and motion for you to approach.*

The player characters start just outside the keep. The first time they arrive at the keep, the characters must proceed to the outer gatehouse (detailed later in this chapter), which functions as a tutorial with helpful sidebars. You can skip this location for subsequent visits to the keep unless the player characters want to return to it.

After the characters visit the gatehouse or whenever they return to the keep, have the players choose a location shown on the map. The Keep Locations table summarizes noteworthy sites within the keep in the order they appear. Each location provides approximately 30–60 minutes of gameplay, depending on the nature of the characters' visit.

Once the player characters choose a location, go to that location and review its "What You Need to Play" section.

Keep Locations

Location	Description
1: Outer Gatehouse	Guards vet entrants and keep watch at this gate.
2: Barn	Livestock and steeds are stabled and groomed here.
3: Private Apartments	These modest apartments house long-term residents.
4: Smithy	A blacksmith crafts metalwork goods here.
5: Provisioner's Shop	This messy, halfling-owned shop specializes in gear.
6: Trader's Shop	This trading post sells armor and weapons.
7: Bank	The keep's citizens store their valuables at this bank.
8: Traveler's Inn	Travelers can rent rooms at this cozy inn.
9: Tavern	Patrons flock to this rowdy tavern for food and drink.
10: Guild House	Merchants and artisans assemble in this guildhall.
11: Temple	Priests offer guidance and healing in this house of worship.
12: Inner Gatehouse	This fortification is the keep's last line of defense.
13: Inner Bailey	The keep's guards live and train in this enclosed court.
14: Fortress	The castellan governs the keep from this stronghold.

Exploring the Keep

The player characters can visit any location in the keep, meeting and interacting with the citizens who reside there. Each keep location employs one or more NPCs, typically representing the most important person at a location, such as an establishment's owner or highest ranking representative.

The map of the keep isn't to scale, but you can use it to track the characters' current whereabouts. If this is your first time as Dungeon Master, ask your players to keep the party together; it's easier if the player characters visit each location as a group.

Location Descriptions

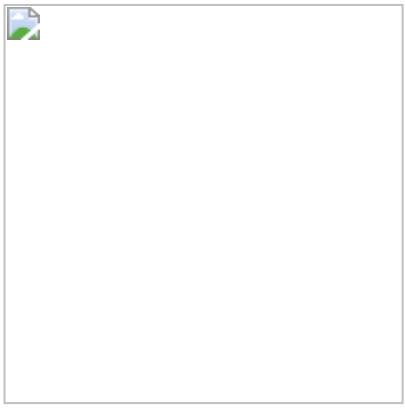
Each description of a keep location has the following sections:

- **Features.** This section details noteworthy features about the location.
- **NPCs.** Each keep location contains one or more NPCs, each reflected by a digital NPC Card nested within the section.
- **Services.** Services offered at the location, such as goods for sale or rooms for rent, appear here. If a player character pays for a good or service, collect Gold Pieces equal to its cost from that player.
- **Quest.** This section contains a quest unique to the location. Most take place in the keep, though some encourage the characters to venture beyond its walls. Each quest can be completed only once.

Social Interaction

The keep offers ample opportunities for characters to socialize with its inhabitants. All NPCs in the keep are initially Indifferent toward the characters. For more about NPC attitudes, see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

Combat



Combat is prohibited in the keep. If you need game statistics for an NPC, reference the recommended stat block listed on their NPC Card.

At your discretion, characters who antagonize peaceful members of the keep might attract the attention of the soldiers of the keep, of whom there are many (use the **Guard** stat block). Those who refuse to keep the peace might be arrested and detained for a few days, fined up to 50 GP, or ousted from the keep until they can behave.

The following stat blocks are used in this section:

- **Commoner**
- **Curate**
- **Gray Ooze Glob**
- **Guard**
- **Guard Captain**
- **Knight**
- **Noble**

Resting

Unlike in the other two adventure settings, the keep is a safe place to rest and resupply. The characters can freely take Long Rests in the keep. For more on *resting*, see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

Leaving the Keep

The player characters can leave the Keep on the Borderlands whenever they choose. As they accumulate treasure and advance in level, the party might return to spend their hard-earned wealth, rest, or follow up on previously undertaken quests.

Character Advancement

Though there are quests to complete in the Keep on the Borderlands, the characters don't gain levels in this section. Each quest offers its own reward, usually in the form of gold or favors.

1: Outer Gatehouse

This gatehouse is the first stop for those seeking to enter the Keep on the Borderlands. The guards here greet outsiders, watch for potential threats, and permit entrance to citizens and peaceful visitors.

> ***Summary.*** *The beginning of each location summarizes its function in the keep and the NPCs who can be found at it. Don't read this aloud.*

When the characters arrive at the outer gatehouse, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Two stone towers flank an archway that leads into the keep. A sturdy-looking gatehouse spans the archway and connects the towers. A wooden drawbridge allows passage over a steep ditch surrounding the keep. The bridge is currently drawn shut.*
>
> *Two guards stand before the raised bridge. As you approach, one of the guards shouts, "Hail! Do you bring peace or trouble?"*

Boxed Text. *Text that appears in a box like the one in this section is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased for the players when their characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.*

The guards are Bartho and Gala. The characters must respond to the guards and say whether they mean well or ill. After confirming the characters are well-meaning adventurers, Bartho and Gala call for the drawbridge to be lowered, then welcome the party to the keep.

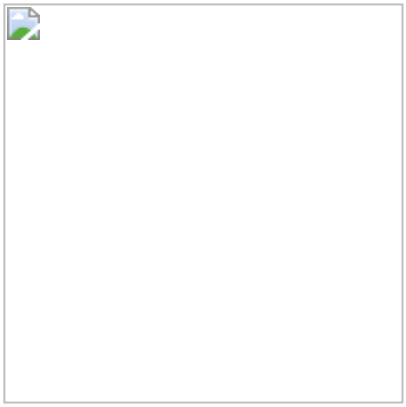
> ***Bartho***
>
> *Human Gate Guard*
>
> - ***Statblock: Guard***

This gullible recruit spends more time dreaming than patrolling.

- ***Distractable.*** *Bartho is easily distracted from his post because he'd rather be doing anything else.*
- ***Sleepy.*** *Bartho likes to catch a few winks during the night shift.*

Rumors>- ***"If you can't afford a bed at the inn, Cornflower will let you sleep in the barn. The hay's real comfy." (True*****)**

- *"Minotaurs aren't real. They're just a myth told to scare little children from wandering into caves." (False)*



Gala

Human Gate Guard

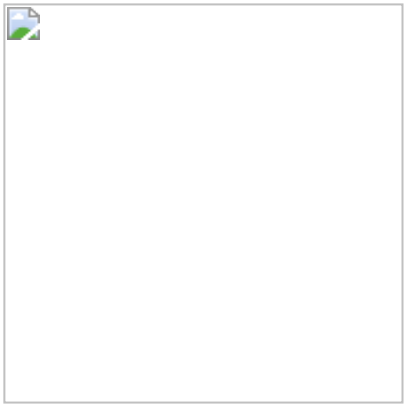
- ***Statblock: Guard***

Though she's memorized all the keep's laws, this guard still has much to learn.

- ***By the Books.*** *Gala clings to the keep's laws—and often recites them aloud—whenever she must make a decision.*
- ***Naive.*** *Gala believes that life is fair, people mostly tell the truth, and good always prevails.*

Rumors>- ***"I've heard the captain of the guard, Andrella, plans to retire soon." (False)***

- *"The keep's coat of arms honors its cavalry, thirty riders strong. I hope to become one." (True)*



Social Interaction. *Player characters can meet many different people throughout the keep. As DM, you assume the roles of these nonplayer characters, whom you can embody through either active or descriptive roleplaying (detailed below). Players also use one or both of these approaches to roleplay their characters.*

Regardless of the approach you prefer, use each nonplayer character's NPC Card to determine how they react to the character's words and actions.

- ***Active Roleplaying.*** *In active roleplaying, you speak with a character's voice and might echo their body language, like an actor taking on a role. You still need to describe things that can't reasonably be acted out.*

An active approach to roleplaying Bartho, an inexperienced guard prone to daydreaming, might involve you pretending to yawn mid-sentence or getting distracted by a butterfly. Perhaps he confides with the characters that he'd rather be doing something else.

- ***Descriptive Roleplaying.*** *In descriptive roleplaying, you draw on your mental image of the character, saying what the character does and how they do it.*

> *A descriptive approach to roleplaying Gala, a straitlaced guard who hopes to ascend in rank, might involve you describing her dutiful posture or no-nonsense expression. You might tell the players that she cautions the characters not to cause trouble as they enter the keep.*

Gatehouse Features

The gatehouse has the following features:

- **Drawbridge.** The keep's first line of defense is a steep ditch, 10 feet wide and 10 feet deep, in front of the fortress. The only sure means to cross the dry moat is the drawbridge at this gatehouse.
- **Gate.** The stone arch behind the drawbridge contains an iron portcullis and large oak doors.
- **Towers.** Stairs inside each square, 30-foot-tall tower connect the ground floor to the roof. Arrow slits in the tower walls and roof battlements help archers defend the keep.

> ***Features.*** *Some features about a location help you set the mood or describe aspects of the location, while others detail important gameplay information, like the depth of the keep's moat (in case a creature falls into it).*

Gatehouse Services

The gatehouse offers the following services:

- **Lower the Drawbridge.** The drawbridge usually remains raised night and day. To lower or raise the bridge, wheels in both towers must be turned to release or tighten the drawbridge's chains. The portcullis operates in a similar manner.

> ***Services.*** *Each location offers unique services. Shops typically offer goods for sale, which might be associated with a handout, while other locations offer more abstract benefits. An NPC at the location can summarize its services to the characters.*

- **Orientation.** The gate guards, Bartho and Gala, can describe and give directions to any location in the keep. They can also tailor recommendations to a traveler's needs. For example, if a character wants to purchase weapons or armor, the guards point them to the trader's shop (area 6).

Quest: Entry Screening

Once the drawbridge is lowered, Bartho and Gala introduce themselves and encourage the characters to lend their services to the keep.

> ***Exploration and Movement.*** *Exploration is open-ended; the players don't take turns moving around the keep the way they do in combat. Instead, players simply say where they want their characters to go. None of the locations within the keep has or requires its own map; as DM, you help the players visualize these places through your descriptions.*

Read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *"The keep has plenty of need for hearty adventurers like you," Gala says. "If you want to make a name for yourselves in this community and earn the castellan's respect, you should visit locations within the keep and offer your aid."*
> >
> > *"Residents usually pay for a job well done," Bartho adds casually.*

Before they venture into the Borderlands, the characters can report to the fortress (area 14) for more information on how they can further the interests of the castellan and his advisers.

> ***Quest.*** *Every location in the keep offers a quest: a heroic task or odd job intended for the party. The characters don't have to complete a quest at a location to benefit from its services. Unless stated otherwise, the characters can decline a quest; they can always return to complete it at a later time. Each quest's reward is stated at the end of its section.*

Bartho's Reward

The guards here have orders to help out around the keep between shifts, but Bartho claims he must rest instead to stay sharp when he's on duty. He pulls the characters aside and asks them to complete quests around the keep for a small reward.

When the characters return to the outer gatehouse after completing at least three quests around the keep, Bartho thanks them and gives each character 5 GP.

> ***Treasure.*** *Rewards within the keep usually come in the form of Gold Pieces (GP). Whenever a player character finds gold, give that player Gold Pieces equal to the listed value, which is tracked on their character sheet. Encourage players to split their treasure as evenly as possible.*

2: Barn

This barn shelters the keep's livestock. It also serves merchants and travelers who need a place to stable their mounts while visiting the keep. Animals housed at the barn receive a box stall or pen, food, and grooming.

When the characters arrive at the barn, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Animals snuffle, cluck, oink, and moo inside the stalls of this spacious barn, which smells of leather and manure. A freckled halfling woman uses a pitchfork to unload hay from a nearby wagon into an empty stall. She wipes the sweat from her brow and extends a hearty greeting.*

The halfling is Cornflower, the barn hand.

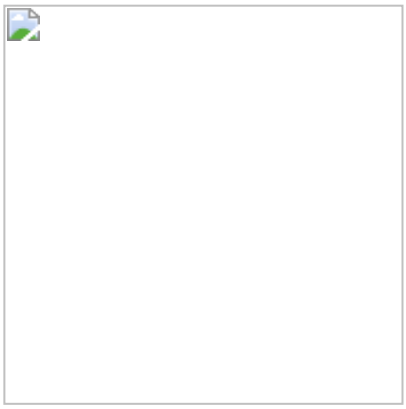
> ***Cornflower***
>
> *Halfling Barn Hand*
>
> - ***Statblock: Commoner***

This spunky stable hand isn't afraid to get her hands dirty.

- ***Animal Lover.*** *Cornflower's best friends are all barn animals.*
- ***Idiomatic.*** *Cornflower likes to use animal idioms, such as "busy bee," "chicken out," and "hold your horses."*

Rumors>- ***"Did you know animals have all sorts of special glands? Giant fire beetles are like big glowing cave lanterns! Isn't nature amazing?" (True*****)**

- *"Careful if you go trekking into the wilderness. The tamaracks are overrun with giant spiders." (True)*



Barn Features

The barn has the following features:

- **Box Stalls.** The barn has roomy stalls for up to six Large mounts.
- **Livestock Pens.** Cows, chickens, pigs, and other barn animals occupy several livestock pens.
- **Loft.** Golden piles of hay are stored in a loft above the animal enclosures.
- **Trough.** Stabled animals drink water from a common trough along the stalls.

Barn Services

The barn offers the following services:

- **Chores.** Once per day, the characters can assist Cornflower with chores around the barn, such as collecting freshly laid eggs, feeding and grooming animals, and milking cows and goats. In exchange for their help, Cornflower pays them 1 GP each.

- **Dairy Products.** For 1 GP, Cornflower sells a pail's worth of milk or a slab of freshly churned goat butter (customer's choice).
- **Hit the Hay.** Cornflower sympathizes with travelers who can't afford to stay at the inn (area 8). She lets them sleep in the loft for free.

Quest: Billy Goat Wranglin'

After introducing herself and explaining the barn's services, Cornflower confesses she could use the characters' help. Read the following text aloud:

> > *"Last night, I accidentally left the goat pen unlocked—and this mornin', all the goats were gone! I'm sure they're still within the keep, but I need to tend to the other animals here and make sure no others get loose. Would you track down the missin' goats and return them to the barn?"*

Cornflower offers the characters 1 GP for every goat they bring back. The number of missing goats equals the number of player characters.

Finding the Goats

The goats are scattered throughout the keep. Roll 1d12 for each missing goat, rerolling duplicates. Keep these results secret. Each result corresponds to a numbered location on the *Keep on the Borderlands Map* where a goat can be found. For example, on a 6, a goat is outside the trader's shop (area 6). To find the goat, the characters must go to that location, though they don't have to venture inside.

A character can narrow their search by making one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 10 Wisdom (Survival). The character follows hoofprints in the dirt.

DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion). The character asks passersby if they've seen a loose goat.

On a successful check, the character learns the location of one goat whose whereabouts the party doesn't already know.

Returning the Goats

When the characters arrive at a goat's location, they find it grazing outside the structure and can coax it back to the barn. When the characters return a goat to Cornflower, she pays them 1 GP as thanks.

3: Private Apartments

Residents and long-term visitors rent apartments in this tenement building. The complex's most notable resident is also its landlord, a crotchety jeweler who invests in gemstones and other valuables.

When the characters arrive at the apartments, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *A wooden jeweler's sign hangs over an open door in the front of this two-story building. Inside, an old human man hunches over a table, peering at an emerald through a jeweler's loupe.*

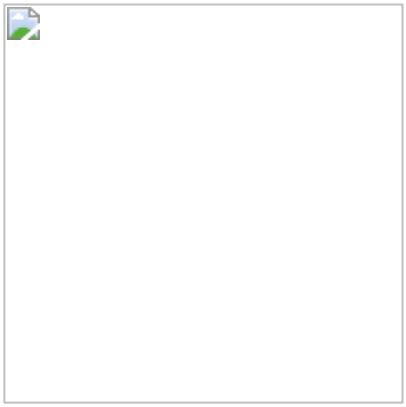
The jeweler, Lenk, puts down his loupe with a sigh and invites the characters in.

> ***Lenk***
>
> *Human Jeweler*
>
> - ***Statblock: Noble***

> *This elderly jeweler can identify and appraise any gemstone.*
>
> - ***Faultfinder.*** *Lenk has a knack for spotting flaws, be they in things or people.*
> - ***Pessimistic.*** *Lenk always sees the worst part of any situation.*

Rumors>- *"Your money isn't safe at the bank. I hear a burglar broke in recently and stole every last coin." (Partially true; the burglar was unsuccessful*)

- *"Some stones hide things. The next time you're in an ancient dungeon or old cave, inspect the walls closely. You just might find a secret door." (True)*



Apartments Features

The apartments have the following features:

- **Apartments.** Each two-story apartment is a section of the same large tenement building. The apartments have identical amenities: a stove, a small drawing room, a bedroom, and a storage area.
- **Rain Barrel.** A large barrel near the building holds clean water for washing dishes and clothes.

Apartments Services

The apartments offer the following services:

- **Buy Gems.** Lenk can buy gems the characters find in their adventures. Lenk exchanges gems at this location for their value in gold. All the gems in this adventure are worth 100 GP; this rate includes Lenk's appraisal fee.
- **Rent an Apartment.** Characters can rent an apartment for 100 GP per month.

Quest: Breaking the Bank

After detailing the services he offers, Lenk tells the characters he's exploring a new line of business. Read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *"With reports of bandits along the trail and the occasional thief here in the keep, I plan to sell strongboxes to help citizens and travelers secure their valuables. I've received a few samples made by local crafters who hope to partner with me in this new venture, but I won't stake my reputation on shoddy handiwork.*
>
> > *"I need to determine which of the strongboxes are fit for sale, and you look like a capable lot. Care to test your mettle on some metal?"*

If the characters agree, Lenk hands each of them a locked iron strongbox and instructs them to try to pilfer its contents however they please. Each strongbox contains a modest amount of gold. If a character can get into a strongbox, they can keep its contents, though Lenk doesn't reveal what's inside.

Cracking the Strongboxes

A character can make one attempt to open a strongbox through any of the following means:

- **Breaking the Strongbox.** Each strongbox is a Tiny object with AC 19, 5 HP, Immunity to Poison and Psychic damage, and Vulnerability to Cold damage. A character who reduces a strongbox to 0 Hit Points with a single attack or spell destroys the strongbox but not its contents.

Picking the Lock (A character who has Thieves' Tools). A character that can use Thieves' Tools to pick the strongbox's lock, doing so with a successful DC 15 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand) check.

- **Prying Open the Lid.** A character can force open a strongbox's lid with a successful DC 15 Strength (Athletics) check.

At the DM's discretion, other methods of opening a strongbox might exist.

Reward

Inside each strongbox is 5 GP. If the characters manage to penetrate all the strongboxes, Lenk grouses about the boxes' poor craftsmanship. If all the strongboxes thwart their attempts, Lenk pays each character 1 GP as a consolation and says there are nobler skills to master than thievery.

4: Smithy

The smithy is where the keep's residents purchase metal goods and have them repaired.

When the characters arrive at the smithy, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *The stench of hot smoke and the sound of clanging metal fill this smithy. Lit by the orange glow of a forge, a dark-haired dwarf pounds a molten ingot at an anvil behind a low wooden counter. Sparks fly with every strike of her hammer.*

The hard-working smith is Kalista.

Kalista

Dwarf Blacksmith

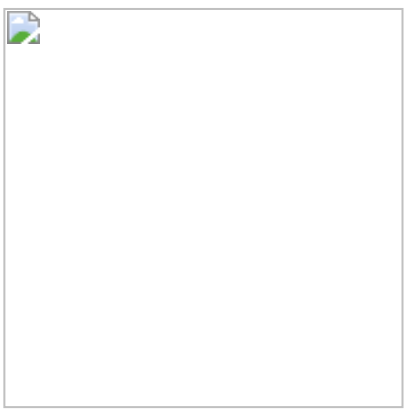
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

The keep's taciturn, hardworking smith prefers to let her hammer do the talking.

- ***Standoffish.*** *Kalista is curt toward people she doesn't know, especially adventurers.*
- ***Stern.*** *Kalista never cracks a smile.*

Rumors>- ***"Every now and then, adventurers return from the Caves of Chaos with magic weapons, but most of the time they don't come back at all." (True)***

- *"Mind your equipment around oozes. Their touch can corrode even the sturdiest of metals." (True)*



Smithy Features

The smithy has the following features:

- **Forge.** The large forge behind the counter fills most of the smithy's lower floor. Water barrels and bellows flank the forge.
- **Mundane Goods.** A few stout posts support the upper floor. They bear hanging tools and everyday metal goods: cast-iron pots, horseshoes, and so on.
- **Private Rooms.** Two doors at the rear of the smithy lead to storerooms containing ingots and spare tools. A third door opens to a washbasin and spiral stairs that ascend to Kalista's quarters.

Smithy Services

The smithy offers the following service:

- **Leather Branding.** For 1 GP, Kalista can brand anything made of leather, such as Leather Armor or a Spellbook, with the keep's coat of arms.

Kalista makes armaments but doesn't sell them. She forges them exclusively for the keep's armed forces.

Quest: Tools of Destruction

If a character asks to purchase armor or weapons, Kalista explains why she no longer sells those to outsiders. Read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *"I used to sell arms and armor to would-be heroes like you. I had heard reports of foolhardy adventurers falling victim to brigands and monsters. I shrugged those stories off for a time.*
> >
> > *"Last winter, the castellan's forces thwarted an assault on the keep. After the onslaught, I was sickened to learn that many of the attackers' weapons bore my maker's mark. By selling to outsiders, I had unwittingly armed our enemies. I vowed then never to forge another weapon for anyone but the keep's soldiers. I haven't since."*

The keep's soldiers occasionally bring confiscated weapons to Kalista for destruction.

Weapon Smelting

Kalista recently received a cartload of battered and rusted weapons seized by the keep's defenders. She asks the characters to help melt them down.

The disarmament process takes 1 hour. To aid Kalista with it, the characters must succeed on the following ability checks in this order:

DC 13 Strength (Athletics). The character piles the weapons in the forge and undertakes the tough labor needed to properly melt them down.

DC 13 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand). The character carefully tips a crucible of molten metal into an ingot mold without spillage.

If at least one character succeeds on each check, the party completes the disarmament. The characters can retry failed checks, but if they accumulate three failures, Kalista dismisses them with a sigh, insisting she can handle the rest of the job herself.

If the characters successfully help Kalista destroy the weapons, she pays them each 5 GP.

5: Provisioner's Shop

This cluttered shop provides supplies for travelers who venture into the wilderness.

When the characters arrive at the shop, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Dusty rays of sunlight stream into this general store through small windows near the ceiling. Barrels, bottles, boxes, and other supplies crowd its shelves.*

An affable halfling named Ruckus runs this shop.

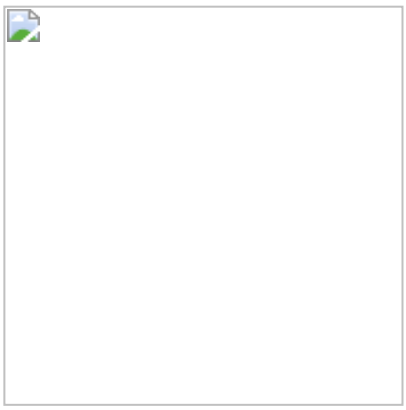
> ***Ruckus***
>
> *Halfling Shopkeeper*
>
> - ***Statblock: Commoner***

The owner of the provisioner's shop is small but has a big personality.

- ***Loud.*** *Ruckus compensates for his short stature by shouting up to taller customers.*
- ***Everything Has a Place.*** *Despite the mess in his shop, Ruckus always knows exactly where to find just what he's looking for.*

Rumors>- ***"I hear goblins throw wild parties." (Oh Yeah*****!)**

- *"Lenk the jeweler gives a fair price for gems and precious stones. He lives in the private apartments." (True)*



Shop Features

The shop has the following features:

- **Brimming with Supplies.** Everyday supplies fill the shop's packed interior. Shelves, crates, chests, and cabinets overflow with clothes, blankets, tools, trinkets, toys, and other miscellaneous junk.
- **Private Rooms.** A side entrance leads to a few low rooms where Ruckus lives.
- **Storage.** A storeroom door toward the back of the shop is roped off and bears a hastily scrawled sign that reads, "WARNING! FIRE GHOST. STAY OUT!" Inside the storeroom, jumbled goods cram floor-to-ceiling shelves.

Shop Services

The Provisioner Handout lists items available for sale. Give this handout to the players whenever they visit this location. Ruckus might point proudly at some of the illustrations to invite comment about how nice they look.

Items for Sale

Item	Cost
Acid	25 GP
Antitoxin	50 GP
Ball Bearings	1 GP
Potion of Healing	50 GP
Healer's Kit	5 GP
Hooded Lantern	5 GP
Rope	1 GP

Musical Instruments for Sale

Instrument	Cost
Drum	6 GP
Flute	2 GP
Lute	35 GP
Viol	30 GP

Quest: Fire Ghost

If the characters don't bring up the unusual sign on the storeroom door, Ruckus soon mentions it and asks for their help in resolving the matter. Read the following boxed text aloud:

> *"I've been smelling smoke in the storeroom for the past few days. Yesterday I peeked inside and saw a cloaked figure smoldering like an ember—surely it was a fire ghost! I threw a flagon of ale at it to put out the fire, but I haven't dared to enter the room since. Someone braver than me should lay the ghost to rest. Maybe you could do it?"*

The "Ghost"

The only thing haunting the shopkeeper is his own reckless disorganization. Ruckus recently relocated some inventory to a shelf in his storeroom; the merchandise included a hefty magnifying glass. On sunny days, the light through a high window focuses through the lens on a dusty old cloak, causing it to smolder. It's a major fire hazard.

Ruckus's decision to leave the storeroom alone compounds the danger. If the problem isn't dealt with soon, a conflagration is inevitable.

Investigating the Scene

Characters can get at the truth by investigating the jumbled storeroom, where they discover a singed cloak stained with dried ale.

Gathering Clues. Characters in the storeroom can gather clues by succeeding on one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Intelligence (Nature). At noon each day, sunlight from the window shines on the cloak.

DC 12 Wisdom (Perception). High on a shelf near the storeroom window, a magnifying glass protrudes from an open box.

Solving the Case

After inspecting the storeroom, the characters can draw their conclusions. A character who considers the evidence and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation) check correctly deduces the source of the smoke and the risk it poses to Ruckus's shop. A character who gathered one or both clues has Advantage on this check.

If the characters explain the situation, Ruckus is relieved to hear his shop isn't haunted and corrects the fire hazard. As thanks, he pays each character 10 GP and encourages them to spend it here.

6: Trader's Shop

Only bold traders bring goods to the Borderlands.

When the characters arrive at the shop, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Awnings extend over weapon racks and armor stands at this trader's shop. Inside, a tall human woman polishes a suit of armor with an oily rag.*

The woman is Oleira, the shop's owner. The trader's shop is a family business. She runs it with her two teenage sons, Derlo and Ulmar, who dream of being brave knights rather than shopkeepers.

Oleira

Human Shopkeeper

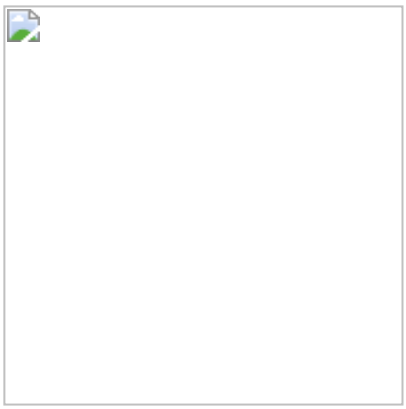
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

This merchant and mother of two deals in wares ranging from common trade goods to curious bric-a-brac.

- ***Fastidious.*** *Oleira can't stand dusty wares. Every item must be spotless.*
- ***Parental.*** *Oleira sometimes treats her customers like she does her children.*

Rumors>- ***"A hermit, Xanthe, was cast out of the keep for practicing evil magic. I hear she was in a cult. Think of the children!" (False)***

- *"The keep's two outer gate guards, Bartho and Gala, are both so green. I'm not sure which of them I trust less to protect us." (True)*



Shop Features

The trader's shop has the following features:

- **Indoor Display.** The shop interior contains minor luxuries such as salt, spices, cloth, and furniture, which Oleira sells only to citizens of the keep. The goods are clean and well organized.
- **Outdoor Display.** When the shop is open, Oleira displays armor and weapons under the awning.
- **Warehouse.** Behind the shop is a small warehouse, where Oleira receives, sorts, and stores goods.

Shop Services

The Trader Handout lists items available for sale. Give this handout to the players whenever they visit this location.

Sturdy Armors and Shields

Armor	Cost
Breastplate	400 GP
Splint Armor	200 GP
Shield	10 GP
Studded Leather Armor	45 GP

Useful Weapons

Weapon	Cost
Maul	10 GP
Rapier	25 GP
Longsword	15 GP
Spear	1 GP

Quest: Dangerous Stowaway

As the characters browse Oleira's wares, she offers them each 1 GP to unload a wagon while her sons are off watching soldiers train elsewhere in the keep. The delivery is late, so Oleira tells the characters to meet the wagon along the trail.

Unknown to Oleira, the shipment contains a dangerous stowaway. During transit, a nasty ooze slithered onto the wagon and gobbled up its driver. Oozes usually lurk in dark places like caves or dungeons, but they go wherever they can sate their voracious appetites.

Ooze Surprise

If the characters agree, the guards at the outer gate nod at them as they exit the keep and head down the trail. When the characters come across the wagon, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *You find the wagon standing in the middle of the trail with no driver in sight. Some of the crates in the wagon glisten wetly.*

A **Gray Ooze Glob** lurks within the abandoned wagon, waiting to ambush the characters. When the characters approach the wagon, the ooze seeps from the supplies with a hideous squelching noise and fights the characters. Roll Initiative!

Preparing for Combat. Use the "*Combat*" section of the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules), along with the Trail Map and the **Gray Ooze Glob** stat block, to run this encounter.

Reward

After defeating the ooze, carting the goods is straightforward work. When the characters return to Oleira, she's shocked to learn of the ooze—she or her sons could've been seriously harmed.

To show her gratitude, Oleira exceeds her original offer, paying each character 5 GP for their heroism.

7: Bank

The keep's residents and visitors store their most valuable belongings and savings in the bank.

When the characters arrive at the bank, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *This one-story bank sports a teller's window with a drop-down counter. A bespectacled halfling woman in a silk tabard sits behind the glass. Outside, a bored human guard stands watch.*

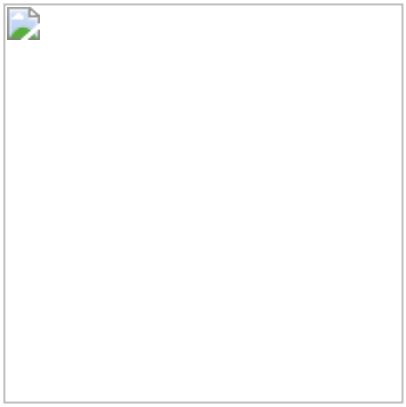
The banker, Quink, relies on the keep's soldiers for protection. Yvette is stationed here most days to discourage anyone from hassling Quink.

> ***Quink***
>
> *Halfling Banker*
>
> - ***Statblock: Noble***

> *Quink is a miserly moneylender.*
>
> - ***Frugal.*** *Quink never budges on matters of money.*
> - ***Garrulous.*** *Conversations with Quink last twice as long as they should.*

Rumors>- *"Good supplies are a sound investment. Ruckus at the provisioner's shop can outfit you with quality gear." (True*)

> - *"I've heard dragons are a bit like bankers—we obsess over every coin. If you ever encounter a dragon, don't touch its hoard unless you want to meet its wrath." (True)*



Yvette

Human Bank Guard

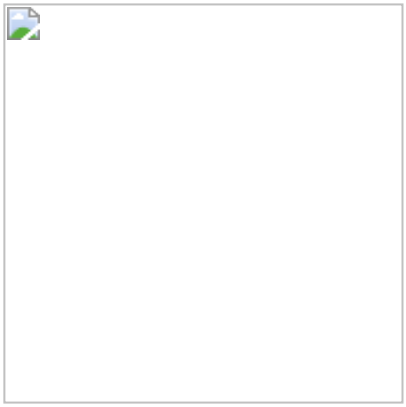
- ***Statblock: Guard***

This corrupt guard exploits her station for selfish ends.

- ***Bitter.*** *Yvette thinks the world owes her.*
- ***Grifter.*** *Yvette is always hunting for new ways to get rich quick.*

Rumors>- *"There's an alms box at the temple that usually contains a few gold pieces. I hear Fazzir doesn't even lock it." (True*)

- *"If you find yourself face to face with an owlbear, just play dead. It will quickly get bored and move on." (False)*



Bank Features

The bank has the following features:

- **Service Counter.** Sturdy hinges connect a wooden drop-down counter to the bank's window. At night, Quink folds up the counter and closes the window, then secures both with an iron grate.
- **Vault.** A locked, reinforced door connects the bank teller's office to Quink's private quarters and a vault. Inside the vault are several strongboxes containing 250 GP worth of deposited wealth.

Bank Services

The bank offers the following services:

- **Take Out a Loan.** A character can borrow up to 10 GP from the bank with an interest rate of 1 GP per day. There's no minimum payment due, but if the loan is left unpaid for long, word of the character's financial insolvency spreads throughout the keep.
- **Deposit and Withdraw Money.** A character can deposit gold and other valuables at the bank. They can withdraw some or all the deposited savings during regular business hours at no cost.

A Hefty Bank Deposit

Quest: Bank Job

At the service counter, Quink asks the characters if they're adventurers looking for work. If they say yes, she leans in close and speaks to them in hushed tones. Read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *"Yvette here is a lousy guard. There was a break-in recently on her watch, and the burglar got away. I fear the culprit might attempt another break-in, and I'd like you to prevent the heist—quietly. I can pay you a lump sum of twenty gold pieces for your services. What do you say?"*

If the characters accept, Quink continues:

> > *"I'd like you to stake out the bank tonight. If you see a burglar trying to enter, intervene and convince the criminal to leave at once. Remember, I'm paying for discretion. If you try to give the thief a trouncing, it will no doubt cause a scene. I want this matter resolved without violence."*

Quink believes the culprit lives in the keep.

Thief in the Night

That night, a masked thief stealthily approaches the bank's door and attempts to pick its lock. The thief is Indifferent toward and wary of the characters if approached but doesn't immediately run away.

As an Influence action, a character can dissuade the thief and make one of these ability checks:

DC 15 Charisma (Deception). The character tells the thief a lie, like saying the guards are coming.

DC 15 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces the thief to pursue a different line of work.

DC 15 Charisma (Intimidation). The character threatens the thief, who abandons the heist.

On a successful check, the thief lingers long enough for the characters to recognize Yvette, the bank's usual guard! On a failed check, she flees before they can get a good look at her.

Reward

Quink pays the characters 20 GP for stopping the heist as promised. If they also reveal the thief's identity, Quink is flabbergasted but adds a 10 GP bonus for the characters' exceptional work. Soon after, two guards arrive and arrest Yvette. After the arrest, Yvette no longer appears at this location.

8: Traveler's Inn

This inn caters to weary travelers, merchants, and adventurers. It offers a range of accommodations depending on a customer's budget.

When the characters arrive at the inn, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *The smell of soap and lavender fills this warm inn. The front door opens to a lobby staffed by a stout dwarf behind a lacquered wooden counter with a shiny call bell.*
> >
> > *"Greetings," the dwarf says in a deep voice. "Are you looking to book a bed for the night?"*

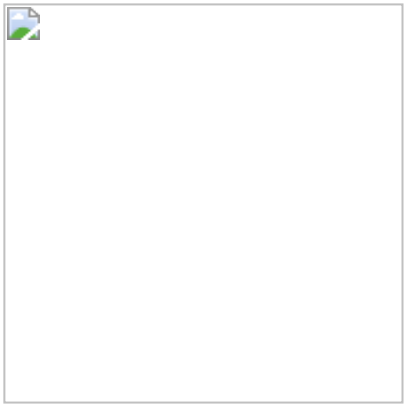
The dwarf is Haldryck, the innkeeper.

> ***Haldryck***
>
> *Dwarf Innkeeper*
>
> - ***Statblock: Noble***

> *Jovial and accommodating, Haldryck is a fast friend to anyone who visits his inn.*
>
> - ***Epicurean.*** *Good food and drink are the keys to Haldryck's heart.*
> - ***Overseller.*** *Haldryck advertises his inn's basic necessities—like clean sheets and doors with locks—as luxury amenities.*

Rumors>- *"The food at the tavern is the best in the Borderlands!" (Doubtful*)

> - *"My inn is the only place visitors to the keep can stay overnight." (False)*



Inn Features

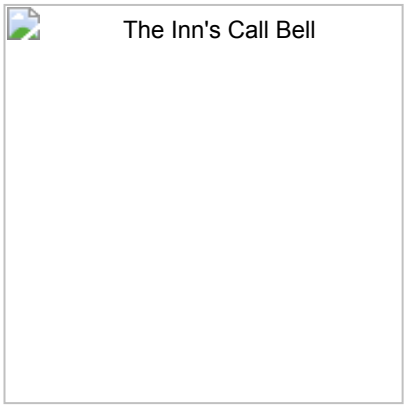
The inn has the following features:

- **Common Room.** The common sleeping area is a large, open room with a handful of stiff cots and a crackling hearth. Patrons can also lay out their own sleeping mats on the floor for a safe—albeit uncomfortable—night's sleep.
- **Private Rooms.** Customers with gold to spare can sleep in one of the inn's six private rooms. Each well-appointed room has four beds. Haldryck boasts that the beds in these rooms are bug free.
- **Wares.** Haldryck rents and sells various bedding items, including wool blankets, woven sleeping mats, and pillows stuffed with goose down.

Inn Services

The inn offers the following services:

- **Rent a Cot.** Cots in the common room are available to rent for 1 GP per night. Roll 1d4 for each character who rents a cot. On a 1, the character finds a dead bug on their pillow.
- **Rent a Room.** A private room costs 5 GP per night. Roll 1d4 for each character who rents a room. On a 4, the character finds 1 GP under their mattress.



Quest: Wake-up Call

After making introductions, Haldryck tells the characters they look light on their feet and in possession of good manners. He could use their help. Read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *"Three guests sleeping in the common room this evening requested to be woken before sunrise, but I have a morning errand to attend to, so I won't be able to fulfill my promise to them. I'd like you to wake the early risers in my stead without stirring any of the other guests.*
> >
> > *"In exchange, I can offer you a free night's stay in one of my private rooms. There's even one with a window! How does that sound?"*

If the characters agree, Haldryck thanks them and describes the three guests who requested wake-up calls before returning to his duties.

Waking the Early Risers

When the characters arrive to wake the early risers, twelve people are asleep in the common room. The early risers are scattered about the room, dozing among other guests who don't wish to be disturbed.

To find and wake an early riser without disturbing the other guests, a character must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a failed check, the character still wakes the early riser but bumps a grumpy sleeper in the process, rousing them from their slumber. The characters must make this check three times, one for each early riser.

Checking In with Haldryck

For waking the early risers, Haldryck rewards the party 5 GP, recommending they use it to rent a private room. If the characters completed the task without bothering any other guests, Haldryck gives the characters an additional 10 GP for their good work. Otherwise, he mutters about receiving a noise complaint from an unhappy guest.

9: Tavern

Dubbed the Drunken Dragon, this tavern caters to residents and visitors alike and hosts a nightly drinking game.

When the characters arrive at the tavern, read the following boxed text aloud:

The aroma of cooked mutton, fresh bread, and stiff ale wafts from this bustling tavern's doors. Inside, retired soldiers, chatty merchants, and weary travelers dot the taproom. A raised stage in one corner is empty.

A human man in an apron greets you from behind the bar. "Welcome to the Drunken Dragon. What can I getcha?" he asks in a smooth voice.

The man behind the bar is Umbrusk. After taking the characters' orders, Umbrusk invites them to play chug champion (see this location's quest).

Umbrusk

Human Barkeep

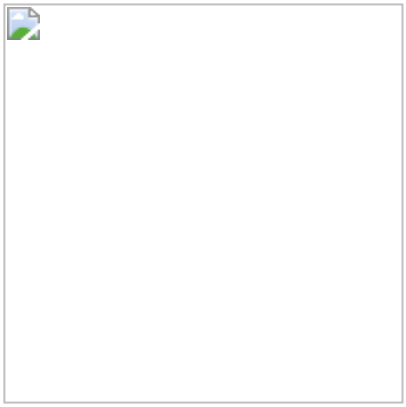
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

Umbrusk serves up drinks, food, and gossip at the keep's tavern.

- ***Eavesdropper.*** *Umbrusk listens to his patrons' conversations.*
- ***Good Memory.*** *Umbrusk never forgets a face or name.*

Rumors>- ***"A traveler named Mallyn walks the trails outside the keep. If you meet her, say hello for me! She's my niece." (True*****)**

- *"Whenever I order a cake, it gets seized by goblins, roadside bandits—you name it. I guess everybody likes dessert." (True)*



Tavern Features

The tavern has the following features:

- **Taproom.** The tavern's taproom holds a sticky bar counter, ten round tables, and forty chairs in varying states of disrepair.
- **Kitchen.** In addition to hired cooks, Umbrusk's staff includes patrons who couldn't pay their tabs. They all work in a cramped, greasy kitchen behind a swinging door near the bar.
- **Stage.** There's no formal vetting process for who can use the stage; the taproom's rowdy patrons loudly express their enthusiasm—or disdain—for anyone brave enough to perform.

Tavern Services

The tavern offers the following services:

- **Food and Drink.** The tavern sells the items listed on the Drunken Dragon Handout. Give this handout to your players whenever they visit this location.

Drinks

Drink	Cost
Stiff Ale	1 GP
Honey Mead	1 GP
Wine Dry	1 GP
Bark Tea	1 GP
Cider	1 GP

Food

Food	Cost
Bottomless Soup	1 GP
Cheese and Fruit	1 GP
Roast Fowl	1 GP
Roast Joint	2 GP
Good Stew	1 GP
Very Good Stew	2 GP

Dessert

Dessert	Cost
Apple Fritter	1 GP
Bread Pudding	1 GP
Slice of Cake	1 GP

- **Buy the House a Round.** For 20 GP, a character can buy a drink for everyone in the taproom. For the next 24 hours, that character has Advantage on Charisma (Persuasion) checks made in the keep.
- **Solicit Rumors.** Once per day, a character in the tavern can make a DC 10 Charisma (Persuasion) check to glean a rumor from the bartender or a chatty patron. On a successful check, roll on the Tavern Rumors table to determine the rumor they learn. The rumor's veracity is noted in parentheses; don't read that part out loud.

Tavern Rumors

1d4	Rumor
1	"Bree-yark" is a goblin phrase that means "we surrender!" (False)
2	The keep's banker, Quink, has been having trouble with break-ins recently. (True)
3	For the right price, the outer gatehouse guards will let anyone into the keep. (False)
4	Kalista, the keep's blacksmith, doesn't forge weapons anymore. (Partially true; she makes them only for the keep's militia.)

Quest: Chug Champion

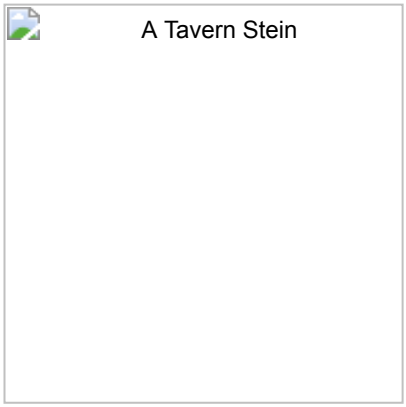
The tavern's signature game is a nightly contest called chug champion.

Playing the Game

To play chug champion, participants—called "chuggers"—line up at the bar and pay 5 GP each to receive three pints of either heady ale or non-alcoholic cider (their choice). The goal is to drink the pints as quickly as possible over 3 rounds.

Each round, each participating character must succeed on a DC 12 Constitution saving throw to quaff the pint in one go. On a failed save, the character drinks too slowly and is eliminated along with a handful of other chuggers. Otherwise, they proceed to the next round. A character who succeeds on all three saves wins the game.

If multiple characters succeed on all three saving throws, compare the results of those chuggers' last saves, rerolling any ties. The character with the highest result places first, the character with the second-highest result places second, and any other characters place third.


A Tavern Stein

Winning the Game

The winner receives 25 GP. Second- and third-place chuggers win 15 GP and 10 GP, respectively.

10: Guild House

This guild house offers membership to merchants and artisans, who enjoy benefits such as workshop space, library access, and armed escorts.

When the characters arrive at the guild house, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Well-oiled oak beams crisscross the high ceilings of this stately guild house. Quiet murmurs and the sounds of crafting echo among workshops. A staircase ascends to a modest library.*
> >
> > *A human woman in a wheelchair emerges from an adjacent office and politely greets you.*

The greeter is the guildmaster, Toryn.

Toryn

Human Guild Master

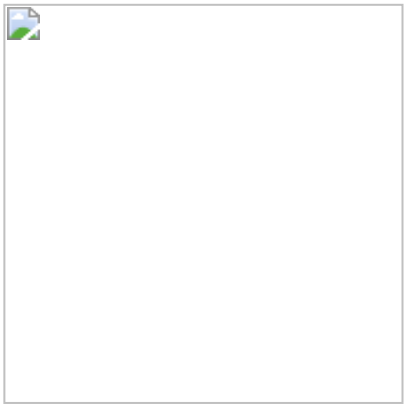
- ***Statblock: Noble***

This guild master helps fellow artisans get a good deal for their wares and services.

- ***Judgmental.*** *Toryn looks down on artisans who refuse to join the guild.*
- ***Witty.*** *Toryn says smart things and always has the last word.*

Rumors>- ***"Castellan Winvarle is the ultimate authority in the keep." (True*****)**

- *"The Borderlands are home to all sorts of trades: musicians, mercenaries, treasure-seekers, spies—even monsters can have a profession. My advice? Pay them what they ask." (True)*



Guild House Features

The guild house has the following features:

- **Administration.** Toryn oversees the guild from a polished but cluttered oak desk in an office with a private elevator.
- **Library.** The guild holds the largest collection of books and scrolls in the keep.
- **Workshops.** Guild members ply their trades in 10-foot-square sections of a spacious room partitioned by hanging curtains.

Guild House Services

The guild house offers the following services:

- **Customize Equipment.** A character can hire an artisan to customize their equipment, such as emblazoning a Shield with a symbol of their choice or embellishing the binding of a Spellbook. The standard rate is 5 GP per piece of equipment.
- **Research.** The library contains books on history, magic, and the creatures of the Borderlands. For 1 GP, a character can spend 1 hour researching in the library. The next time that character takes the Study action relating to a subject covered by the library's books, they have Advantage on the Intelligence check made as part of that action. A character can benefit from this only once per day.

Quest: Chaos Unfurls

Once Toryn learns the characters are adventurers, she tries to hire them. Read the following aloud:

> > *"I recently received a shipment of tempestuous magical scrolls. I need them stored in special scroll cases. If you tackle this chore for me, I'll pay you a total of twenty gold pieces. Be warned: the scrolls have a will of their own."*

If the characters agree, Toryn leads them to a storeroom containing a pile of empty scroll cases and a warded chest that holds the scrolls. She instructs the characters to open the chest when they're ready, then wishes them good luck and departs hurriedly.

Ensorcelled Scrolls

When the characters open the chest, the scrolls erupt from it in a flurry of whirling parchment and shimmering ink. Roll Initiative.

Each round on Initiative Count 10 (losing Initiative ties), the scrolls fold themselves into weapons and deliver brutal paper cuts. Each character must succeed on a DC 10 Dexterity saving throw or take 1d4 Slashing damage. A character reduced to 0 Hit Points by a scroll has the Unconscious condition but is Stable.

There are two scrolls for every player character in the party. As an action, a character can try to stow a scroll in its case by succeeding on one of the following ability checks:

DC 12 Dexterity (Sleight of Hand). The character deftly plucks a scroll from the air and puts it into a scroll case.

DC 12 Intelligence (Arcana). The character pacifies a scroll with an arcane gesture, allowing it to be scooped up and peacefully stored.

DC 12 Charisma (Intimidation). The character bullies a scroll, causing it to flee into a case.

Case Closed

If the characters encase all the scrolls, Toryn pays them 20 GP as promised. If the scrolls knock out all the characters, Toryn finishes the task before tending to the party. The characters wake up in her office with 1 Hit Point each. When the characters come to, Toryn apologizes sheepishly for putting them in so much danger, then awards them 10 GP for their effort.

11: Temple

The temple meets the spiritual needs of the keep. The curate, a human man named Fazzir, guides the temple's daily activities, which include conducting ceremonies, healing injured soldiers, and offering counsel in matters of ethics and morality.

When the characters arrive at the temple, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *The interior of this tall building has a lofty, majestic air. Rows of benches face an altar at the end of a spacious worship hall. Above the altar is an enormous stained-glass window of a sunrise.*

Until recently, the temple's head priest was a human woman named Ivlis, but she recently departed the keep on a long-anticipated pilgrimage.

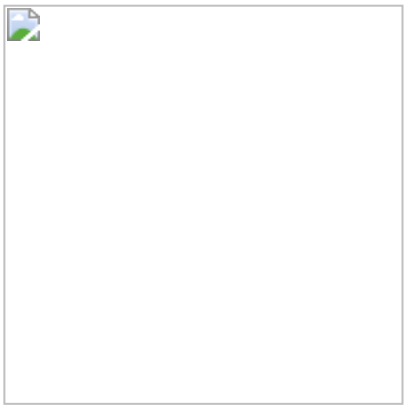
> ***Fazzir***
>
> *Human Priest*
>
> - ***Statblock: Curate***

This spiritual leader offers counsel and healing to all who seek the temple.

- ***Altruistic.*** *Fazzir puts the needs of others before his own.*
- ***Trusting.*** *Fazzir always assumes the best of people.*

Rumors>- ***"The keep's former priest, Ivlis, left a large collection of books on all matter of subjects—even occult rituals." (True)***

- *"Anyone entering the inner bailey is bound to cross paths with Shannik, sergeant of the guard. I think he's a little too hard on new recruits." (True)*



DM Secret. **Ivlis** secretly leads the Cult of Chaos, an evil cult that feeds on destruction and disarray. Her supposed religious journey is a cover for her occult activities, which are detailed in the "*Caves of Chaos*".

Temple Features

The temple has the following features:

- **Alms Box.** A stout pole near the temple's entrance holds a small box for visitors to leave donations. At any given time, the alms box contains 1d8 GP. The box is unlocked. A character who steals from the alms box must succeed on a DC 15 Wisdom saving throw or have Disadvantage on D20 Tests for the next 24 hours.
- **Sanctuary.** This spiritual center can accommodate dozens of worshipers. Fazzir delivers sermons from the altar each dawn. His simple lessons appeal to a variety of religious traditions.
- **Underground Accommodations.** Fazzir inhabits modest rooms in the temple's cellar. The cellar also contains two small spare rooms. Fazzir uses these rooms as infirmaries or guest quarters as circumstances demand.

Temple Services

The Sacred Services Handout lists available goods and services. Give this handout to the players whenever they visit this location. Fazzir provides the temple's healing and revival services as detailed on the **Curate** stat block.

Sacred Services

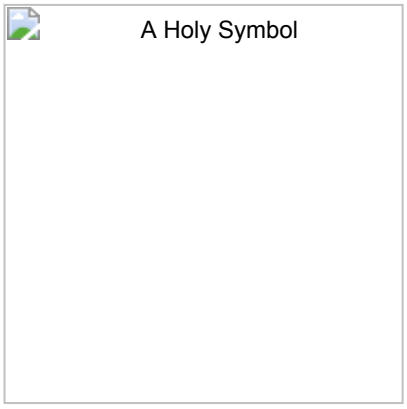
Service	Cost
Flask of *Holy Water*	25 GP
Healing	50 GP
Revival	2,000 GP

May all who act with kindness and virtue Always stand upright.

May neither claw nor steel nor darkness hurt you; Be shielded by the light.

Quest: Priestly Duties

In Ivlis's absence, Fazzir is having trouble keeping up with the flood of new responsibilities. He asks the characters to help him with two clerical tasks.



Impromptu Blessing

A married couple asked Fazzir to give them a blessing for safe travel for a romantic getaway. Fazzir needs two assistants to perform the ceremony.

To conduct the ceremony properly, two characters must each take the Study action and make a DC 10 Intelligence (Religion) check. On a successful check, the couple departs the temple with cheer. On a failed check, the couple postpones their trip, uneasy about what their journey might bring.

Occult Symbol

Last night, a vandal defaced the temple with a strange symbol. Fazzir doesn't recognize the symbol. He asks the party to scrub away the graffiti.

A blood-red bell is splattered onto the side of the temple in runny paint. A character who inspects the symbol and succeeds on a DC 13 Intelligence (Arcana) check recognizes the bell as the mark of the Cult of Chaos and an omen of future turmoil. If informed about the symbol's meaning, Fazzir finds the revelation deeply troubling. The mark washes off easily, but its stain on the priest's mind lingers.

Reward

After these tasks, Fazzir gives each character 3 GP regardless of their performance. He is just grateful for their support.

> ***Good-Faith Discounts***
>
> *It's unlikely that the characters will accumulate the gold required to revive a party member. At the DM's discretion, Fazzir might waive any of the fees on the Sacred Services Handout for those he believes show heroic potential.*

12: Inner Gatehouse

This gatehouse houses on-duty soldiers and separates the civilian areas of the keep from the inner bailey (area 13).

When the characters arrive at the inner gatehouse, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *This gatehouse consists of a broad stone archway framed by a squat building constructed along the keep's inner wall. Battlements line its flat roof, atop which two guards stand watch.*

The guards ask the characters about their business, then escort them to Andrella, Captain of the Guard.

Andrella

Human Captain of the Guard

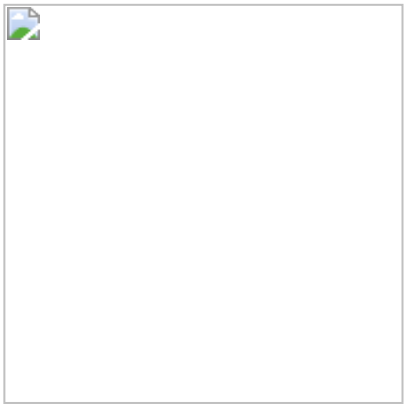
- ***Statblock: Guard Captain***

This captain is strong, stern, and just.

- ***Perfect Posture.*** *Andrella is as strict with her posture as she is with the law.*
- ***Role Model.*** *Many of the keep's young people admire Andrella and enjoy her goodhearted mentorship.*

Rumors>- ***"A dastardly bandit, Pral, accosts travelers along the trail. Apparently he's quite handsome; I'm sure he'll look even better behind bars." (True*****)**

- *"The castellan tells me monsters are drawn to the Caves of Chaos in droves. I wonder why." (True)*



Gatehouse Features

The gatehouse has the following features:

- **Garrison.** Twenty-four soldiers, including Captain Andrella, are garrisoned in the gatehouse.
- **Gate.** The gate features a massive oak double door. During invasions, soldiers can bar the doors with a heavy timber beam from the other side.
- **Murder Holes.** Guards atop the gatehouse can thrust spears down at invaders through holes in the ceiling of the archway.

Gatehouse Services

The gatehouse offers the following service:

- **Requisition Uniforms.** Characters who pledge to defend the keep can requisition uniforms from Andrella free of charge. Give those players one *Borderlands Tabard* each.

Quest: Testing the Defenses

Andrella has an unusual request. Once she learns the characters are adventurers, she dismisses the guards and says the following to the party:

> > *"I want to observe how my soldiers would fare in an invasion scenario. As adventurers, you might be able to simulate such a threat.*
> >
> > *"I'd like you to sneak past the guards stationed here after sunset and steal a pennant from the other side of the gate. As part of this exercise, you can't harm any on-duty soldiers, but I'll explain the situation if any of you are detained. "Are you up for the challenge?"*

In exchange for their work, Andrella offers the characters a total of 25 GP.

Infiltrating the Guardhouse

During the night, eight soldiers stand watch outside the gatehouse: six on the roof and another two on the ground before the open gate. If necessary, use the **Guard** stat block to represent each soldier.

As an action, a character can try to bypass the soldiers and make one of these ability checks:

DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth). The character slips past the soldiers undetected.

DC 15 Strength (Athletics). The character scales the keep's sheer wall between regular patrols.

DC 15 Charisma (Deception). The character fools the soldiers with a disguise or convincing lie.

On a successful check, the character bypasses the soldiers undetected. On a failed check, two soldiers spot the character and take them into custody, but other characters can continue the mission.

Debrief with Andrella

If at least one character reaches the pennant without getting caught, Andrella meets them afterward. She pays the party 25 GP as promised. If no characters were spotted, Andrella throws in an extra 15 GP and chastises the soldiers they evaded.

If all the characters are detained before anyone in the party can grab the pennant, Andrella visits the characters in a sparsely furnished detention cell and thanks them for testing her soldiers. She informs the soldiers about the training exercise and smugly pays the characters 25 GP on their release.

13: Inner Bailey

The sheltered inner bailey is where the keep's defenders live and practice combat drills.

When the characters arrive at the inner bailey, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Targets and practice dummies dot this courtyard, which contains a large stable and poles with hanging rings. Cavalry soldiers train atop horseback while guards watch the area from the walls and towers that rise around it.*
> >
> > *A mountain of a man in heavy armor tromps up to you. "No lollygagging!" he grouses.*

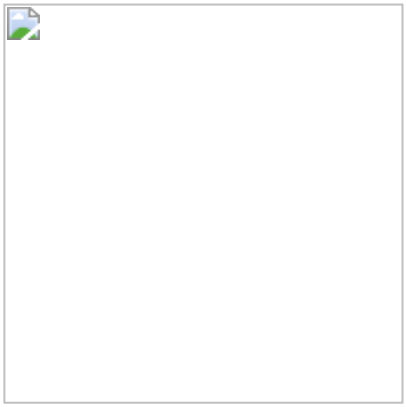
The man is the keep's demanding and curmudgeonly sergeant of the guard, Shannik.

> ***Shannik***
>
> *Human Sergeant of the Guard*
>
> - ***Statblock: Guard Captain***

> *Captain Andrella's second in command brooks no evildoers.*
>
> - ***Brusque.*** *When Shannik can substitute a reply with a grunt, he does so.*
> - ***Shortsighted.*** *Shannik's plans and actions fail to account for long-term repercussions.*

Rumors>- ***"An adventurer is only as good as their gear. Oleira at the trader's shop is a friend of mine. She can sell you armor and weapons." (True*****)**

- *"A real soldier can sleep off any injury. After a battle, I usually rent a bed at the inn. I always sleep better there." (True)*



Inner Bailey Features

The inner bailey has the following features:

- **Cavalry Stable.** The bailey contains a stable with thirty horses. These war-trained horses serve as mounts for the keep's cavalry.
- **Guard Towers.** Four towers rise above the bailey, one in each corner. The smallest, to the southeast, holds up to eight guards. The southwest and northeast towers each hold one dozen guards, as well as food stores and other supplies. The Great Tower to the northwest is 60 feet tall.
- **Watches.** Eight soldiers, two atop each tower, watch over the inner bailey at all hours. Use the **Guard** stat block for these soldiers if necessary.

Inner Bailey Services

The inner bailey offers the following service:

- **Weapon Upgrade.** The keep ordered too many crossbows, which untrained recruits can't wield effectively. Shannik wants to trade the weapons for simpler ones. In exchange for 25 GP and a Shortbow, he can provide a character with a *Hand Crossbow*.

Quest: Shannik's Chores

Shannik hires the characters to complete a couple chores around the inner bailey. The characters can refuse his request, but Shannik asks with increasing insistence each time they visit the inner bailey.

Disrupting the Charge

Shannik wants to train two green recruits for the cavalry. He has them ride around the bailey for 10 minutes, spearing the hanging rings with lances.

During the exercise, Shannik asks the characters to disrupt the training by distracting the horses or their riders without causing injury to either. A character can do so by succeeding on one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Wisdom (Animal Handling). The character guides a horse off course.

DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation). The character tries to startle a horse or its rider.

A Cavalry Lance Laden with Training Rings

Catapult Installation

Shannik wants to install a catapult atop the Great Tower to defend against invaders. To do so, the characters must succeed on the following ability checks in this order:

DC 15 Strength (Athletics). The character hauls supplies out of the stores in the southwest tower, across the bailey, and up the Great Tower.

DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation). The character correctly assembles the catapult according to its blueprints.

DC 13 Wisdom (Perception). The character calibrates the catapult by test-firing it at a target outside the keep's walls.

This task takes 1 hour. If at least one character succeeds on each check, the party completes the task. The characters can retry failed checks, but if they accumulate three failures, Shannik dismisses them, grumbling about their incompetence.

Reward

In exchange for completing a chore, Shannik pays a character 5 GP. A character can complete each of Shannik's chores only once. Thereafter, the sergeant greets the characters with a respectful nod whenever they visit this area.

14: Fortress

The castellan governs the keep from its fortress, a stone stronghold solidly built to withstand assault. Multiple towers rise above the main building, which is 30 feet tall. The fortress shelters emergency resources, municipal chambers, and the keep's armed forces. Militaristic banners and upholstered furniture decorate its dignified interior.

When the characters arrive at the keep fortress, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Two round towers with pointed roofs flank this tiered stronghold. Archers march along its stone parapets, watching for signs of trouble. Two guards stand outside the fortress's iron doors; they acknowledge passersby with stern nods.*

Fortress Features

The fortress has the following features:

- **Armory.** Barding and lances for the keep's cavalry—thirty troops strong—are stored here, though the equipment is off-limits to the characters.
- **Barracks.** Sparsely furnished quarters throughout the fortress can collectively accommodate up to thirty-six soldiers at once.
- **Great Hall.** A spacious hall in the fortress hosts ceremonies, proclamations, and other receptions.
- **Private Chambers.** Two lavishly decorated rooms are reserved for guests of the keep, while another belongs to the castellan.
- **Towers.** Two peaked towers rise from the fortress.
- **Undercroft.** Beneath the fortress are cellars containing vast provision stores, a cistern, and a dungeon with four stout cells for detainees and prisoners. If Yvette was arrested at the bank (see area 7), she is detained in one of the cells.

Fortress Services

The fortress offers the following services:

- **Defense.** In times of crisis, the castellan can muster up to thirty-six trained soldiers from the fortress to defend the keep. The fortress also provides refuge during incursions.
- **Seat of Government.** During the day, the castellan and his two assistants conduct business in the main building, where they hold audience with citizens and visitors of the keep.

Quest: Official Errands

Each official in the fortress spurs the characters to explore a different adventure setting.

Dwern the Scribe

The castellan's scribe, a dwarf man named Dwern, sits at a tidy desk in an austere office, documenting changes to the keep's inventory in a heavy ledger.

When the characters visit Dwern, he issues the following quest:

> > *"I've commissioned a map of the wilderness beyond the keep. However, the map is sorely lacking in detail, and few are willing to brave the wilds to properly survey them—but you look like you're made of sterner stuff.*
> >
> > *"If you help me finish my map by exploring the surrounding lands, I'll compensate you fairly."*

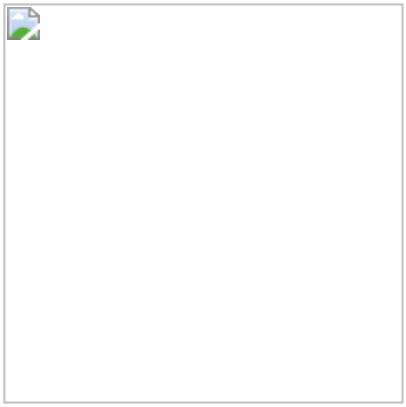
If the characters explore three or more wilderness regions (see the "*Wilderness*" section) and report their findings to Dwern, the scribe pays them a handsome reward: a large, glittering gemstone (worth 100 GP), which they can sell to the jeweler for gold (see area 3).

> ***Dwern***
>
> *Dwarf Scribe*
>
> - ***Statblock: Noble***

> *This gruff scribe prefers the company of books over people.*
>
> - ***Bookworm.*** *Dwern has read more books than anyone else in the keep.*
> - ***Curmudgeonly.*** *Dwern is ill-tempered toward younger people—which, to him, are most people.*

Rumors>- *"The guild house's library boasts a modest but impressive collection of books on history and magic." (True*)

> - *"There's an ancient statue somewhere in the forests north of the keep. It was once the site of strange rituals. Some say it still is." (True)*



Elandra the Adviser

The castellan's trusted adviser, an elf woman named Elandra, operates in one of the towers. Carpets and tapestries decorate her chamber.

When the characters visit Elandra, she issues the following quest:

> *"While Castellan Winvarle protects the keep from outside threats, it's my duty to preserve the peace within its walls and ensure its citizens are content.*
>
> *"I'd like you to visit a few businesses within the keep and help their owners with any odd jobs they might have. I recently acquired an item of arcane significance. Assist me in this effort, and the item is yours."*

If the characters complete three quests within the keep and report back to Elandra, she rewards them with one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

Elandra

Elf Adviser

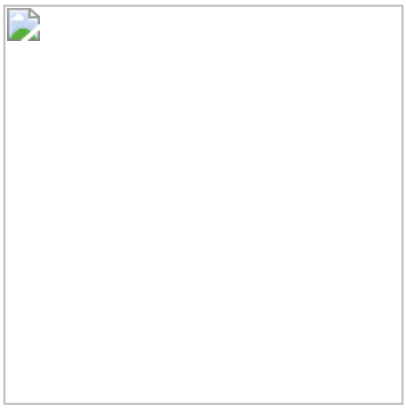
- ***Statblock: Noble***

Elandra provides guidance to the castellan and citizens of the keep.

- ***Cautious.*** *When presented with a choice, Elandra typically prefers the option with the least amount of risk.*
- ***Complainer.*** *Nothing is ever good enough for Elandra.*

Rumors>- ***"Every night, the tavern hosts a rowdy little drinking game with prizes. It's not for me." (True)***

- *"Kalista, the keep's blacksmith, doesn't sell weapons to adventurers. If you want to know why, ask her." (True)*



Winvarle

Human Castellan

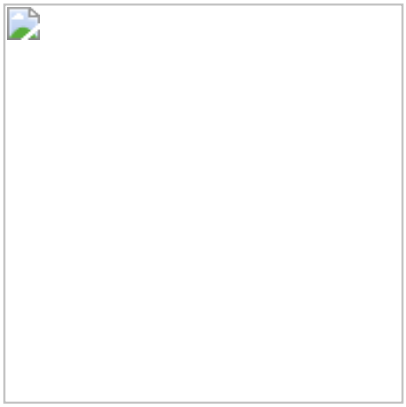
- ***Statblock: Knight***

The keep's noble commander leads his soldiers whenever the keep comes under attack.

- ***Idealistic.*** *Winvarle's ideals are rooted in lofty notions of righteousness.*
- ***Oblivious.*** *While he excels at battle strategy, Winvarle scarcely knows the inner workings of his own keep.*

Rumors>- ***"The Cult of Chaos is an affront to all that is good." (True)***

- *"Anyone can pledge to defend the keep. Talk to Andrella in the inner gatehouse if you'd like to join the keep's defenders." (True)*



Winvarle the Castellan

The keep's noble castellan, an human man named Winvarle, holds court daily in the great hall. A keen strategist, Winvarle casts his vigilant gaze toward the Caves of Chaos, where rumors of a sinister cult have surfaced (see the "*Caves of Chaos*").

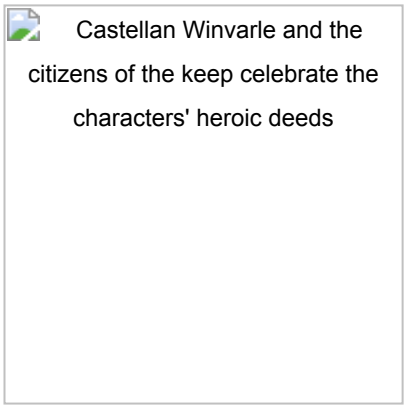
When the characters visit Winvarle, he issues the following quest:

> *"Your arrival is fortuitous. I've heard whispers of a nefarious cult—the self-proclaimed Cult of Chaos—that reportedly operates in a cave network to the northeast. I believe the source of the cult's power resides in one of those caves.*
>
> *"These lands yearn for heroes. For the good of the Borderlands and the people under my charge, I humbly ask you to investigate these rumors and, if need be, quash this evil before it reaches the keep."*

Winvarle claims this quest is its own reward, but he adds that the Caves of Chaos abound with treasure, hoping to entice any characters who seek only to fill their coffers.

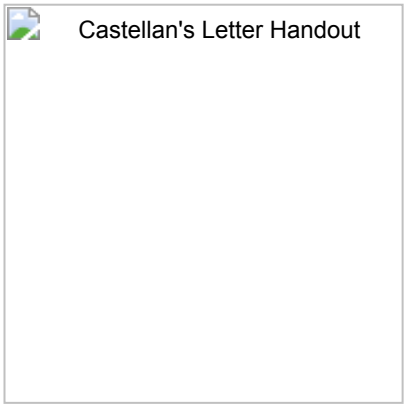
Castellan Winvarle also encourages the characters to meet with his adviser and scribe, who might have other tasks for them to complete.

Heroes' Return


Castellan Winvarle and the citizens of the keep celebrate the characters' heroic deeds

If the characters return to this location at level 3, having fulfilled all three keep officials' quests (detailed in the previous sections), they receive a heroes' welcome. That evening, Castellan Winvarle throws a celebration in the characters' honor and invites the citizens of the keep to participate in the festivities. At your discretion, any of the NPCs within the keep might be present at the celebration to mingle with the characters and show their appreciation.

At the height of the revelry, the castellan publicly thanks the characters and presents them a writ of congratulations. Give the players the Castellan's Letter Handout, which might inspire future adventures involving the Keep on the Borderlands.

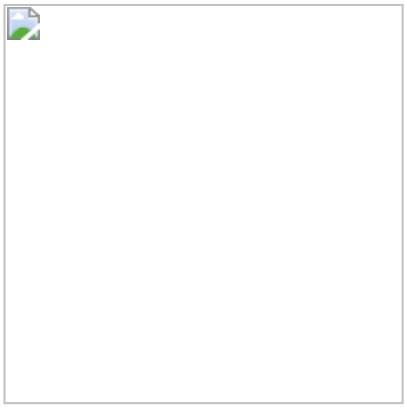

Castellan's Letter Handout

> *Noble Adventurers,*
>
> *I extend to you my deepest thanks. Your gallant efforts have forestalled the forces of chaos and made the Borderlands a safer place. Where there was once uncertainty, there is now hope.*
>
> *Through your valiant deeds, you have proven yourselves to be more than mere mercenaries or vagabond explorers—you are heroes of the highest caliber. You have done an incredible service to the citizens of this keep, ensuring they can prosper in peace.*
>
> *As a token of my appreciation, I have reserved a chamber in the fortress for you. You and your companions may come and go in the keep as you please. Henceforth, consider it a base from which you can embark on future adventures, no doubt for the betterment of these lands and the people who call them home.*
>
> *Gratefully,*
>
> ***Winvarle***
>
> *Castellan of the Keep*

Ending the Adventure

Castellan Winvarle's celebration marks the end of this adventure, but there's still plenty to explore after that. The characters can continue to adventure in the Keep on the Borderlands, the *Caves of Chaos*, and the *Wilderness* (detailed in each respective section) until they've experienced all the Borderlands has to offer. You can also use them to tell stories of your own.

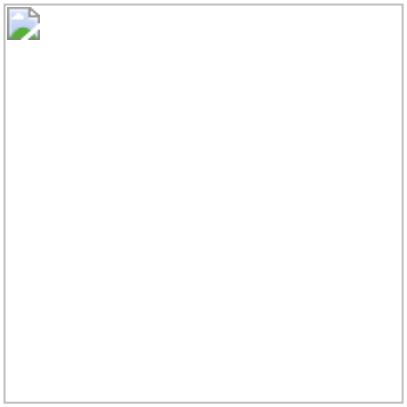
If you wish to advance these characters beyond level 3 and create new adventures for them, you need the core rules: the *Player's Handbook*, the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, and the *Monster Manual*.



Wilderness

The wilds of the Borderlands teem with dangerous animals and ravenous monsters.

DM Secret. This is for the Dungeon Master's eyes only. Unless text appears in a read-aloud box (like the one below), don't read it to the players.



Getting Started

The *Wilderness Map* displays all the regions characters can visit in this section of the adventure. The player version of this map doesn't reveal the contents of each wilderness region, only the general geographic features. Share that map with your players. The Caves of Chaos and the Keep on the Borderlands aren't labeled on this version of the map so the players don't confuse them with wilderness regions.

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *Your adventuring party enters the wilderness. Mysteries await you in this untamed land. Where do you want to go?*

The Wilderness Regions table summarizes the regions in the order they appear within this section. If fully explored, each region provides about 60–90 minutes of gameplay.

Each region is roughly the same difficulty, but the Trail region functions as a tutorial with helpful sidebars. If this is your first time as the DM, encourage the players to start there. Otherwise, have them choose a region shown on the map.

Once the player characters choose a region, go to that region and review its "What You Need to Play" section.

Wilderness Regions

Region	Description
1: Trail	Friendly travelers and no-good bandits alike use this dirt road.
2: Woods	These majestic forests shelter wily fey and occult secrets.
3: Fens	Territorial lizardfolk and a spy for hire lurk in this wetland.
4: Tamarack Stand	Giant spiders plague this vast stand of conifers.

Exploring the Wilderness

Wilderness encounters occur across large tracts of unmapped backcountry. The text tells you when to use a map and monsters; otherwise, you can resolve encounters using words and imagination.

Map: Wilderness (DM Version)	Unlabeled Version	Player Version

Region Descriptions

Each description of a wilderness region has the following sections:

- **Features.** Important features about the region, such as its lighting, appear here. The text assumes the characters explore the wilderness during the day and camp or return to the keep at night.
- **Getting Started.** This section provides setup instructions for the DM and introduces the region to the characters with thematic read-aloud text.
- **Encounters.** This section presents encounters that might occur in the region. Each encounter's text details what challenge the characters must overcome.

Combat

Some encounters pit the characters against foes that mean them harm, such as wild animals or greedy bandits. See the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) for how to run a combat encounter.

The following stat blocks are used in this section:

- **Bandit**
- **Bugbear Warrior**
- **Commoner**
- **Cultist**
- **Curate**

- **Giant Spider**
- **Gnoll Warrior**
- **Goblin Warrior**
- **Gray Ooze Glob**
- **Guard**
- **Hobgoblin Warrior**
- **Jacko**
- **Knight**
- **Kuo-Toa Marauder**
- **Lizardfolk Warden**
- **Mimic**
- **Noble**
- **Ogre**
- **Ogre Zombie**
- **Owlbear**
- **Pral**
- **Red Dragon Wyrmling**
- **Skeleton**
- **Sprite Skirmisher**
- **Steam Mephit**
- **Stirge**
- **Zombie**

Resting

The dangers of the wilds keep travelers on their toes. The characters can take only Short Rests while exploring a wilderness region. To take a Long Rest, characters must visit the keep (see "*Keep on the Borderlands*"). For more on *resting*, see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules).

Leaving the Wilderness

The characters can leave the wilderness any time they choose, provided they aren't in combat. If they return to a region later, it's as they left it.

Character Advancement

In this adventure, the characters can gain a level by exploring different regions. After the characters complete at least one encounter in all four regions, everyone in the party gains 1 level. This advancement occurs only once. If the characters are already level 3, they don't gain a level for achieving this milestone.

Region 1: Trail

This dirt trail connects the Keep on the Borderlands to the Caves of Chaos and the lands beyond.

Trail Features

The trail has the following features:

- **Lighting.** The trail is illuminated with Bright Light.
- **Terrain.** The 10-foot-wide trail is well kept and mostly flat. Spaces off the trail, however, are Difficult Terrain.

> ***Features.*** *This section presents special features about the region. Use these to enhance your descriptions or handle situations where rules like lighting or terrain are relevant.*

> *The rules glossary in the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) defines any capitalized rules such as Bright Light.*

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> > *You travel along a well-kept trail east of the Keep on the Borderlands. Gnarled tree roots and big rocks mark the edges of the ten-foot-wide path.*

> ***Boxed Text.*** *Text that appears in a box like the one in this section is meant to be read aloud or paraphrased when the characters first arrive at a location or under a specific circumstance, as described in the text.*

> *Boxed text is included for the region in general and for each encounter in it. Read the region's boxed text aloud before choosing the encounter, then read the boxed text aloud for that encounter to begin it.*

The characters continue down the trail. Along the way, they face one or more encounters (detailed in the following section). The length of the characters' journey is up to you.

Trail Encounters

Each time the characters use the trail, roll once on the Trail Encounters table to determine what the characters encounter. If this is your first time being the DM, run the encounters in the order presented.

Trail Encounters

1d4	Encounter
1	Looted Wagon
2	Talkative Traveler
3	Game Trail
4	Bandit Ambush

> ***Random Tables.*** *You can use tables like this one to randomly determine parts of the adventure. In this case, roll 1d4 to randomly determine what the characters encounter on the trail. Alternatively, you can forgo rolling and simply choose an encounter from the table.*

> ***Theater of the Mind.*** *While the "Bandit Ambush" encounter later in this region uses a map, the "Looted Wagon" encounter happens in your collective imaginations!*

Looted Wagon

> *A wagon stands on the trail ahead. The driver and horses are nowhere to be seen.*

The wagon was looted by bandits, who stole the horses and scared away the driver. Led by a local menace named Pral, these bandits frequently accost travelers along the trail (as happens in the "Bandit Ambush" encounter described later in this adventure).

A character who inspects the wagon can make one of the following ability checks to learn more about it. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Intelligence (Investigation). The character deduces the wagon was ambushed by bandits.

DC 13 Wisdom (Survival). The character discovers a striking bootprint left by Pral. The heel is mongrammed with the letter *P*.

DC 13 Wisdom (Perception). The character finds treasure the bandits missed (see below).

> ***Ability Checks.*** *When the outcome of an action is uncertain, the game uses a d20 roll to determine success or failure. This is called a D20 Test. An ability check is one type of D20 Test. Here's how to run the ability check in the "Looted Wagon" encounter:*

- ***Describe the Scene****. Read the boxed text to paint a mental picture of the scene.*
- ***Ask the Players, "What Do You Do?"*** *If the players aren't sure how to respond, suggest ways they could glean more information, like looking for tracks.*
- ***Narrate the Results****. The Difficulty Class (DC) for each listed ability check is 13. This number represents the difficulty of the task. If the total of the d20 and its modifiers equals or exceeds 13, the check succeeds. On a 12 or lower, it fails. The encounter's description tells you what happens on a successful check. In this encounter, nothing happens on a failed check, but the character can try again.*

- ***Example.*** *The Cleric searches the wagon and makes a Wisdom (Perception) check. The player rolls a d20 and adds their character's Perception modifier (+5) for a total of 17. The check succeeds, and the Cleric finds the treasure.*

Treasure. The wagon holds supplies intended for the keep: animal feed, bales of hay, and sacks of freshly milled flour. Stashed in one of the sacks is a purse that contains 12 GP.

> ***Treasure.*** *Treasure entries detail loot in an area, such as Gold Pieces (GP). Whenever a player character finds gold, give that player Gold Pieces equal to the listed value, which is tracked on their character sheet. Encourage players to split their treasure as evenly as possible.*

Talkative Traveler

> *A young woman with a massive backpack and an eager smile hikes toward you along the trail. The traveler waves at you excitedly.*
>
> *"Good day!" she says. "I'm Mallyn. Might you be adventurers? I ask because I've been out here looking for adventures of my own—to no avail. After camping out here for days, I still don't have any tales worth telling. Do you?"*

Mallyn

Human Traveler

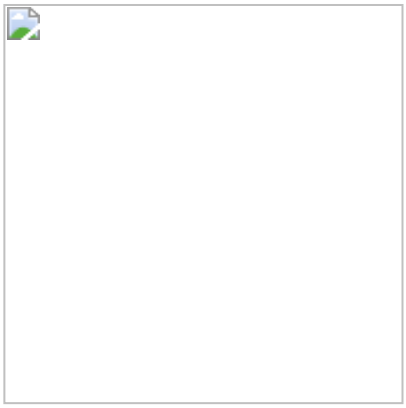
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

This young wayfarer's heart is filled with wanderlust.

- ***Easy Come, Easy Go.*** *Mallyn doesn't get attached to possessions or acquaintances.*
- ***Inquisitive.*** *Mallyn eagerly asks strangers lots of questions.*

Rumors>- ***"Don't wander into the fens unless you're looking for trouble. The lizardfolk there don't like visitors." (True)***

- *"My uncle Umbrusk runs the tavern in the keep. He hears all kinds of gossip in the taproom." (True)*



Mallyn, a Friendly wanderer, is looking for tales of derring-do from brave adventurers. She stops to ask the characters to tell stories of their exploits.

A character can take a minute to tell Mallyn a story and make one of the following ability checks to impress her. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Charisma (Deception). The character spins a grand yarn about a harrowing experience that never happened.

DC 13 Charisma (Performance). The character vividly recounts a legendary story through song, dramatic reenactment, or interpretive dance.

If at least one character succeeds on the check, Mallyn thanks the party and gives them a pouch she found on the trail. Otherwise, she encourages them to keep adventuring until they have something more interesting to share. Regardless, Mallyn prefers to travel alone and doesn't accompany the characters on their journey if invited.

Treasure. The pouch Mallyn found contains 10 GP.

> ***Attitudes.*** *Every creature has a starting attitude toward the characters: Friendly, Hostile, or Indifferent (see the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules)). Regardless, creatures defend themselves in combat.*

Game Trail

> *You spot a regal elk on the trail beside a dense thicket. Startled by your approach, the elk lopes into the thorny thicket. "Blast!" cries a husky voice from somewhere in the brambles.*

A character can safely navigate the thicket to the source of the noise by succeeding on one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 12 Wisdom (Survival). The character follows the narrow game trail used by the elk.

DC 12 Intelligence (Nature). The character knows how to avoid the brambles' thorns.

On a failed check, a character scrambles through but takes 1d4 Piercing damage from the thorns.

Hidden Glen. A hidden glen lies on the other side of the game trail. Dozens of elk graze here in peace. Hiding in the bushes is Haldryck, a Friendly innkeeper who likes to hunt. (Haldryck also appears in "Keep on the Borderlands".)

Haldryck asks the characters to keep his hunting spot a secret. If they agree, he gives the characters 5 GP and encourages them to spend it at his inn when next they visit the keep.

Social Interaction. *Player characters meet many different people while adventuring. As DM, you assume the roles of these nonplayer characters, whom you can embody through either active or descriptive roleplaying (detailed below). Players also use one or both of these approaches to roleplay their characters.*

- ***Active Roleplaying.*** *In active roleplaying, you speak with a character's voice and might echo their body language, like an actor taking on a role. You still need to describe things that can't reasonably be acted out.*

An active approach to roleplaying Haldryck in the "Game Trail" encounter might involve you pretending to hide behind imaginary foliage and speaking in hushed tones.

- ***Descriptive Roleplaying.*** *In descriptive roleplaying, you draw on your mental image of the character, saying what the character does and how they do it.*

In the "Bandit Ambush" encounter, a descriptive approach to roleplaying Pral, a smarmy bandit captain, might involve you describing his flashy smile or confident swagger. You might tell the players that he holds out his hand expectantly for the characters' gold.

Haldryck

Dwarf Innkeeper

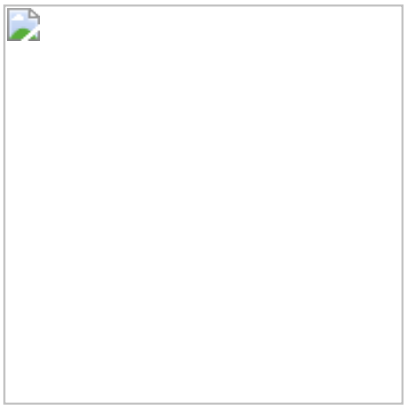
- ***Statblock: Noble***

Jovial and accommodating, Haldryck is a fast friend to anyone who visits his inn.

- ***Epicurean.*** *Good food and drink are the keys to Haldryck's heart.*
- ***Overseller.*** *Haldryck advertises his inn's basic necessities—like clean sheets and doors with locks—as luxury amenities.*

Rumors>- *"The food at the tavern is the best in the Borderlands!" (Doubtful*)

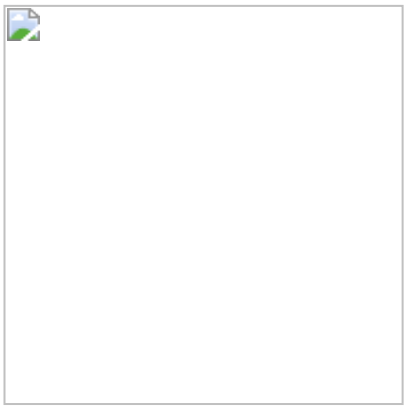
- *"My inn is the only place visitors to the keep can stay overnight." (False)*



Bandit Ambush

A handsome man in a green-and-gold tunic and fancy boots saunters out of the bushes. "Hello," he says casually as he blocks your path. "I'm Pral. Perhaps you've heard of me. Who am I kidding? Of course you have!"

Pral draws a sword. "Your money and your equipment, please. This is a robbery."



Pral leads a local gang of bandits. Three **Bandits** hide in the nearby bushes. Pral and the bandits are Hostile to the characters.

If the characters don't relinquish their gold or talk their way out of the situation, Pral gives the signal for the bandits to spring out (see the "Fighting the Bandits" section).

Adjusting the Difficulty. To make the encounter easier, you can reduce the number of **Bandits**, or you can add another bandit to increase the difficulty.

Avoiding a Fight. As an Influence action, a character can try to defuse the situation and make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Charisma (Deception). The character lies to Pral to gain safe passage, perhaps by pretending to be a fellow bandit.

DC 13 Charisma (Persuasion). The character convinces Pral that violence isn't necessary.

DC 13 Charisma (Intimidation). The character pressures Pral into reconsidering the ambush.

> ***Advantage/Disadvantage.*** *Sometimes a D20 Test is modified by special situations called Advantage and Disadvantage, which reflect positive and negative circumstances, respectively. See the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) for more on Advantage and Disadvantage.*
>
> *In the "Bandit Ambush" encounter, Pral is Hostile, so characters have Disadvantage on checks to influence him and thus avoid a fight.*
>
> - ***Roll Two D20s.*** *When a roll has either Advantage or Disadvantage, roll a second d20 when you make the roll. Use the higher of the two rolls if you have Advantage, and use the lower roll if you have Disadvantage.*
> - ***Example.*** *A Rogue tries to smooth things over with Pral by pretending to be a bandit. The Rogue makes a Charisma (Deception) check with Disadvantage.*
>
> *The player rolls two d20s and adds their character's Deception modifier (+4) to both results to get two totals: 16 and 9. They use the lower roll, which falls short of the DC of 13, so the check fails—Pral and his bandits start combat! If this check had instead been made with Advantage, it would have succeeded.*

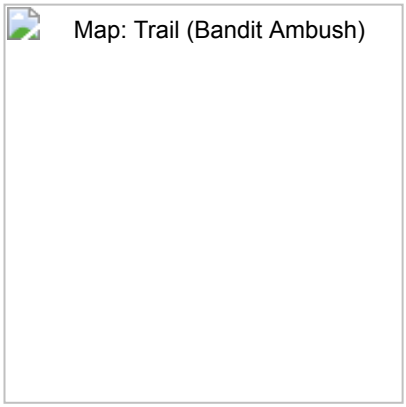
On a successful check, Pral lets the characters pass unharmed. On a failed check, Pral signals the bandits to emerge (see the following section).

Fighting the Bandits

In the case of combat, read the following to begin:

> *Pral tsks in disapproval. He snaps his fingers, prompting more bandits to spring from the bushes with weapons drawn. In an instant, you're surrounded—roll Initiative!*

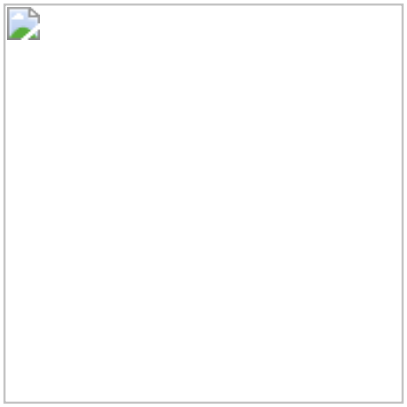
Pral and his bandits are brigands, not murderers. A character reduced to 0 Hit Points by Pral or his cohorts has the Unconscious condition but is Stable. If all the characters are defeated by Pral's band, they wake up 1 hour later on the trail with 1 Hit Point—and 10 fewer Gold Pieces or no Gold Pieces if they have fewer than 10 GP—each, along with a mocking note penned by Pral. At your discretion, Pral might reappear to the characters the next time they explore this region to rob them again.



> ***Combat.*** *Here's how a combat encounter with Pral and his bandits ought to play out:*
>
> - ***Describe the Scene****. Read the boxed text aloud. Then say, "Roll Initiative!" to signal the start of combat. Pral gets his own Initiative roll. Roll once separately for the bandits, who all act on the same turn.*
> - ***Players React****. In combat, the characters and the bandits act on their turns.*
>
> *Use the [https://www.dndbeyond.com/sources/dnd/br-2024](D&D Beyond Basic Rules) to run this encounter.*

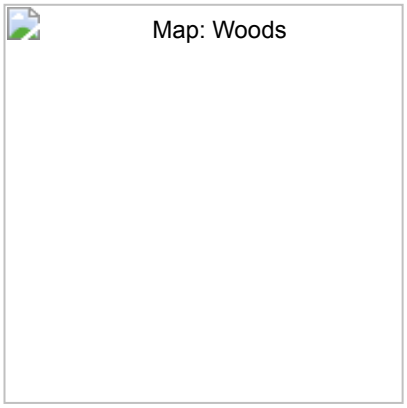
Treasure. Stashed in the bushes are the recent ill-gotten gains stolen by Pral's band. If the characters defeat Pral and his band, they find a sack that contains 20 GP and one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.

> ***Magic Items.*** *Some treasure entries contain magic items, objects imbued with arcane might. Whenever a player character finds a magic item, roll on the Magic Items table in appendix A (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.*



Region 2: Woods

North of the keep sprawls a vast forest, home to hardy oaks, meaty mushrooms, and stores of primal magic. Wherever one goes in the woods, mystery and adventure abound.



Woods Features

The woods have the following feature:

- **Lighting.** The thick forest canopy filters sunlight from above, resulting in only Dim Light.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Dappled sunlight trickles through the canopy of this old-growth forest. Felled trees, shrubs, and mushrooms dot the forest floor.*

Woods Encounters

Each time the characters explore this region, roll once on the Woods Encounters table to determine what the characters encounter.

Woods Encounters

1d4	Encounter
1	Hermit's Hut
2	Occult Ritual
3	Sacred Spring
4	Sparring Sprites

Hermit's Hut

> *After a couple hours of hiking, you happen on a humble hut made from sheets of sturdy bark and blankets of moss. Sweet-smelling smoke wafts from its chimney. The hut's wooden door is shut.*

A hermit named Xanthe lives here. Banished months ago from the keep, Xanthe is initially Hostile toward the characters, who she believes have come to harass her.

A character who tries to convince Xanthe that they bear no ill will can make a DC 12 Charisma (Persuasion) check. A successful check improves Xanthe's attitude to Indifferent, and the hermit invites the party into her hut, where she shares her story and the rumors on her NPC Card. On a failed check, Xanthe slams the door in their faces.

Xanthe

Elf Hermit

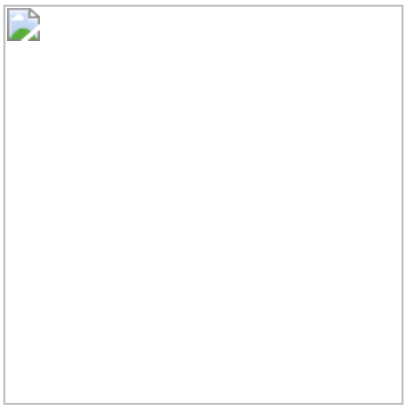
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

One of the Borderlands' oldest and wisest residents was banished from the keep for crimes she didn't commit.

- ***Bad Reputation.*** *Xanthe was wrongfully exiled for using occult magic.*
- ***Distrustful.*** *Xanthe doesn't trust strangers.*

Rumors>- ***"A spy named Jacko prowls the fens. Be wary if you meet him. He'll do anything for coin—even kill." (True*****)**

- *"The temple's head priest is a demon worshiper." (Partially true; Xanthe is referring to Ivlis, the former priest)*



Occult Ritual

Eventually, you come across an eerie statue in a forest clearing. Strange runes are etched into the stone idol. Four human figures in occult robes gather around the statue, chanting ominously.

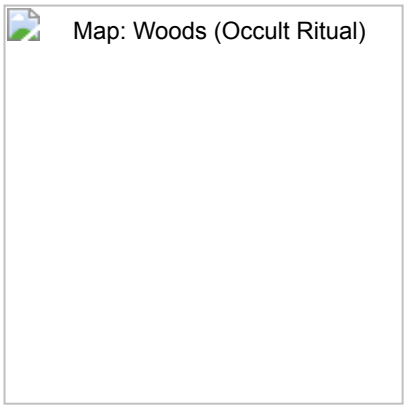
Four **Cultists** conduct a ritual around this ancient statue. They belong to the Cult of Chaos, a faction that delights in death and disarray. They are Hostile toward those not garbed in their cult's attire but don't immediately notice the characters.

The cultists continue intoning until their ritual is complete or interrupted. If disturbed, they fight.

Adjusting the Difficulty. To make this encounter easier, reduce the number of **Cultists**. Conversely, you can make this encounter more challenging by adding one or more **Zombies**, which aid the cultists as undead thralls.

Fooling the Cultists. The cultists are Indifferent toward any character wearing a Cultist's Robe, which they might have obtained in the Caves of Chaos (see "*Caves of Chaos*"). If a character approaches in this disguise, the cultists solemnly motion for the character to join the ritual, but they begin combat if the character refuses.

Completing the Ritual. If the characters join the ritual—or observe it without drawing attention—the statue's runes begin to glow with an eerie red light. After 10 minutes, the sky darkens, and the statue suddenly splits in two with a loud crack. Moments later, a wicked, disembodied laugh echoes throughout the forest. The cultists then disband.



Treasure. The characters can take robes from the defeated cultists. For each robe they take, give the players a *Cultist's Robe*.

Sacred Spring

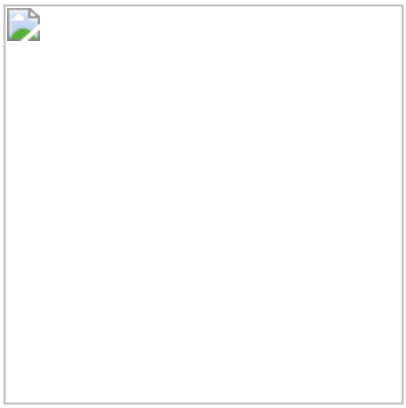
> *Deep in the heart of the forest, the foliage parts to reveal a tranquil grove where a natural spring burbles. Rays of sunlight create a silvery glow about the crystal-clear pool.*

This sacred spring is infused with primal magic.

Healing Water. A character who takes an action to drink from the spring regains 5 Hit Points. Once a character regains Hit Points from the spring, they can't do so again until they finish a Long Rest.

Destroying the Chaos Bell. If the party has the Chaos Bell from the Shrine of Evil Chaos (see "*Caves of Chaos*"), a character can submerge the evil artifact in this sacred spring. If this is done at night while the spring is bathed in moonlight, the bell turns to glittering ash.

Sparring Sprites



> *Farther into the woods, four diminutive, winged warriors flit between oversized toadstools and mossy logs, firing needlelike arrows from tiny bows. One of them calls out to you.*
>
> *"Well met, giant travelers! We are training for battle," he reports. "Care to spar with us?"*

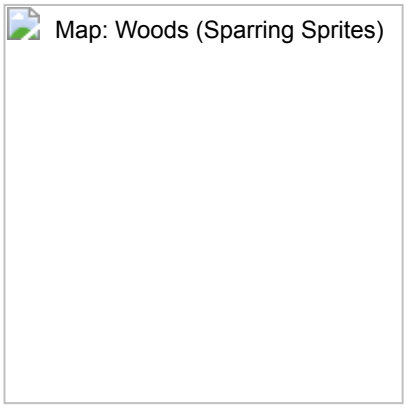
Four **Sprite Skirmishers** spar vigorously in this clearing. The sprites are Indifferent toward the characters but interested in testing their mettle against the party.

Sparring with the Sprites. If the characters agree to spar with the pugnacious fey, the bout proceeds as a nonlethal combat encounter. The sprites bow gracefully, then ready their weapons. Roll Initiative.

The sprites fight valiantly but with restraint. A player character reduced to 0 Hit Points by a sprite has the Unconscious condition and is Stable. The sprites expect similar treatment by the characters.

If all the sprites are defeated, they quickly rouse themselves and commend the characters on their tactical prowess. If all the characters are defeated instead, the sprites wait for the characters to wake up—1 hour later and with 1 Hit Point each—to thank them for helping the sprites train.

Treasure. In exchange for the characters' spirited participation, the sprites reward the party with one magic item; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.



Region 3: Fens

This sodden wetland is home to dangerous wildlife, canny foes, and squelching mud.

Fens Features

The fens have the following features:

- **Lighting.** The fens are in Bright Light.
- **Reeds.** Tall, slender reeds grow throughout the soggy wetland. Areas with reeds are Lightly Obscured and Difficult Terrain.
- **Standing Water.** Shallow, soupy pools of murk pervade the fens. The water is Difficult Terrain.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Mosquitoes buzz about the stands of cattails and gnarled trees in these squashy, stagnant fens. Croaking frogs, chirping cicadas, and squawking birds create an incessant din.*

Fens Encounters

Each time the characters explore this region, roll once on the Fens Encounters table to determine what the characters encounter.

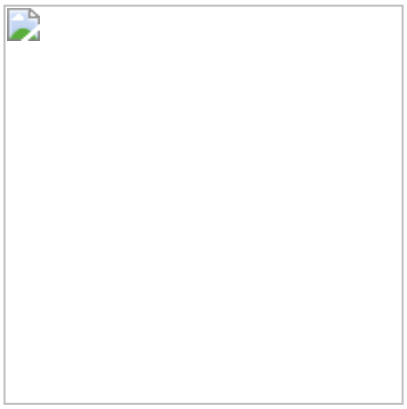
Fens Encounters

1d4	Encounter
1	Flock of Stirges
2	Lizardfolk Swamp

1d4	Encounter
3	Spy's Campsite
4	Sword Ferns

Flock of Stirges

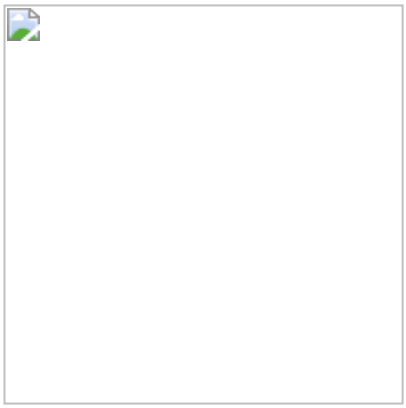
> *Your journey halts at a narrow creek bed stained with blood. Near the shore, a giant river rat lies dead in the mud. The carcass is shriveled as if drained of its bodily fluids.*
>
> *Suddenly, a flock of horrid creatures erupts from the reeds. Each has barbed, leathery wings and a long, sharp proboscis. Roll initiative!*



Three **Stirges** descend on the characters. These bloodthirsty creatures can't be reasoned with; the Hostile stirges fight to the death.

Adjusting the Difficulty. To make this encounter easier, you can reduce the number of **Stirges**, or you can increase the difficulty by adding one or more **Gnoll Warriors** drawn here by the scent of blood.

Lizardfolk Swamp



> *Deeper into the fens, mounds of mud rise above the fetid water and reeds. You spot a glint of gold amid the mud.*

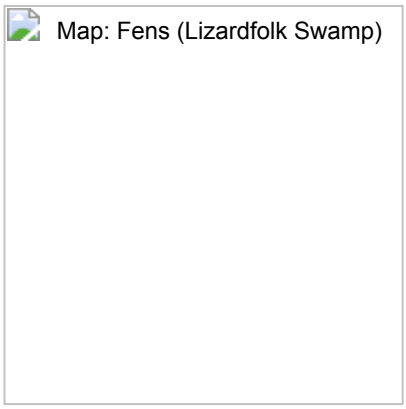
The fen's territorial lizardfolk denizens use these mounds to conceal their treasure. Two **Lizardfolk Wardens** hide among the reeds, watching over the mounds. The lizardfolk have the Invisible condition and are Hostile toward the characters.

After 1 minute, the lizardfolk appear and tersely command the characters to leave at once. If the characters refuse, the lizardfolk fight.

Detecting the Lizardfolk. As a Search action, a character can scan the mud mounds for signs of danger, detecting the lizardfolk with a successful DC 15 Wisdom (Perception) check.

Fighting the Lizardfolk. If a character approaches the mound or disturbs the treasure (see below), the lizardfolk leap out and start combat. Characters who failed to detect the lizardfolk before the ambush have Disadvantage on their Initiative rolls. The lizardfolk fight fiercely in defense of their possessions.

Treasure. Hidden in the mounds are 20 GP and one gemstone (worth 100 GP).



Spy's Campsite

> > *The air is still in this corner of the fens. Just ahead, a curved stand of reeds conceals a secluded campsite with a still-smoldering firepit. The reeds sway and rustle in the muggy breeze.*

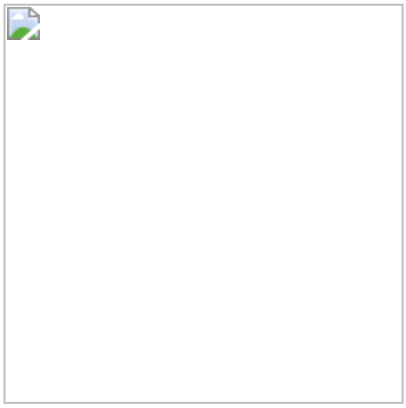
This campsite belongs to **Jacko**, a notorious spy for hire. Jacko hides in the surrounding foliage. He is Indifferent toward the characters.

Detecting Jacko. As a Search action, a character can survey the campsite for clues to its inhabitant's whereabouts and make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 15 Wisdom (Perception). The character spots the glint of Jacko's blade in the reeds.

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival). The character spots faint tracks that lead to the spy.

On a successful check, Jacko emerges from the tall reeds and commends the party on finding his hideout. He then offers his services to the party.



Hiring Jacko. Plucky do-gooders aren't Jacko's usual clientele, but for 25 GP, he offers to join the characters in a single fight anywhere in the wilderness. If the party contains a Rogue or a character with the Criminal background, Jacko offers a 5 GP discount. The shady halfling advertises his services as "all inclusive" and "no questions asked" while performing a cutthroat gesture.

If a player character hires Jacko, whenever the characters roll Initiative in the wilderness, ask that player if they'd like Jacko to assist them in the fight. If so, Jacko joins the fray alongside the party. After the fight, Jacko returns to this location unless the characters hire him again.

Sword Ferns

> > *As you trudge through the mud, you tumble into a ravine of razor-sharp ferns. To continue, you must navigate this treacherous gully.*

A character who examines the ferns can make a DC 12 Intelligence (Nature) check, identifying the plants as sword ferns—bladelike ferns endemic to jungles and wetlands—on a successful check.

To forge a path through the ferns, each character must succeed on one of the following checks:

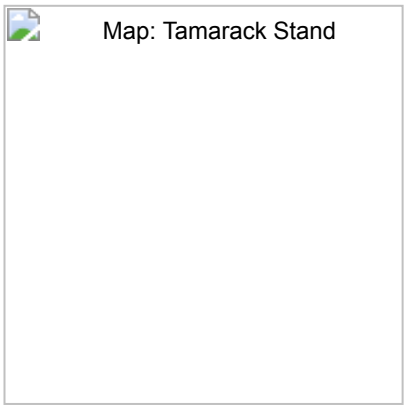
DC 15 Strength (Athletics). The character hacks a path through the ferns with a weapon or stick.

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival). The character finds a safe trail through the ferns used by wild animals.

On a failed check, the character takes 1d6 Slashing damage from the ferns on their way through the gully.

Region 4: Tamarack Stand

This hilly region's sparse trees have short, bristly needles. Forest fires and giant animals are more common in this stretch of the wilds.



Tamarack Stand Features

The tamarack stand has the following feature:

- **Lighting.** Bright Light illuminates the region.

Getting Started

To begin, read the following boxed text aloud:

> *Conifers rise from this highland's soft, peaty soil. Squirrels skitter about the fallen pinecones and pine needles that blanket the ground.*

Tamarack Stand Encounters

Each time the characters explore this region, roll once on the Tamarack Stand Encounters table to determine what the characters encounter.

Tamarack Stand Encounters

1d4	Encounter
1	Flash Fire
2	Giant Spiders' Nest
3	Hobgoblin Patrol
4	Pine Seeds

Flash Fire

> *Your expedition stops at the bottom of a steep gorge—a dead end. As you reorient yourselves, smoke begins to fill the air, and a sudden forest fire spreads through the dry canyon.*

The conflagration roars in the party's direction, engulfing everything in its path.

To escape the fire unscathed, each character must succeed on one of the following ability checks:

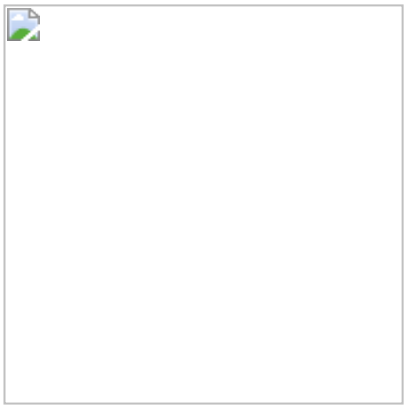
DC 15 Strength (Athletics). The character scales the gorge to safety.

DC 15 Dexterity (Acrobatics). The character leaps across the branches, avoiding the flames below.

DC 15 Wisdom (Survival). The character cuts through a thicket of trees with fire-resistant sap.

On a failed check, a character takes 2d6 Fire damage on their way to safety.

Giant Spiders' Nest



> *You wander into a maze of thick webs camouflaged between tall trees. Two massive arachnids descend on you with fangs bared.*

Two **Giant Spiders** start combat, eager to make the characters their next meal.

Some characters begin this encounter trapped in the spiders' sticky web (see the "Giant Web" section). Roll a die for each character. On an odd number, the character starts their turn in the web.

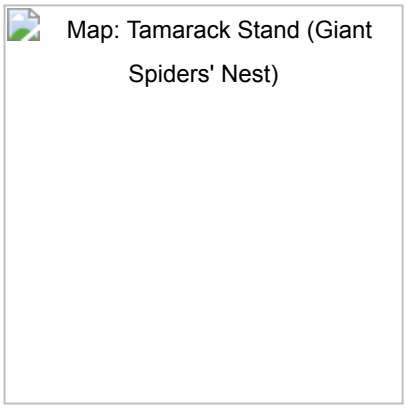
Giant Webs. The giant spiders have woven a 20-foot Cube of thick, sticky webs between the trees to snare prey. The webs are Difficult Terrain, and the area within them is Lightly Obscured.

The first time a creature enters the webs on a turn or starts its turn there, it must succeed on a DC 12 Dexterity saving throw or have the Restrained condition until it breaks free or the webs are destroyed.

As an action, a creature Restrained by the webs can make a DC 12 Strength (Athletics) check. If it succeeds, it is no longer Restrained.

The webs are flammable and laden with dry pollen and old animal carcasses. If the webs take Fire damage, the entire 20-foot Cube of webs ignites, and each creature Restrained by the webs takes 2d4 Fire damage. The webs then burn away and are destroyed at the end of the turn.

Treasure. After the fight, the characters find one magic item suspended in the webs; roll once on the Magic Items table in *appendix A* (rerolling duplicates) to determine the item.



Hobgoblin Patrol

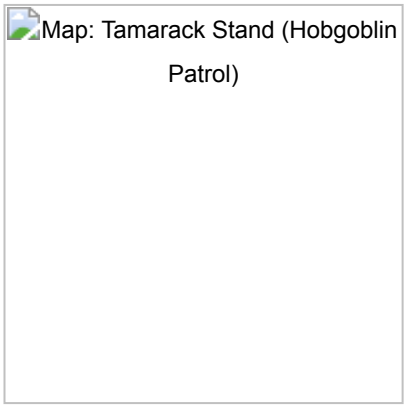
> *Ahead of you, three humanoid warriors in battered armor argue in harsh tones as they march through the forest. They haven't noticed you yet.*

Three **Hobgoblin Warriors** were recently separated from their squadron after a bitter defeat. The Hostile hobgoblins are ornery and assault the characters on sight.

Adjusting the Difficulty. To make this encounter easier, you can reduce the number of **Hobgoblin Warriors**. Conversely, add one more **Hobgoblin Warrior** to increase the difficulty.

Eavesdropping on the Hobgoblins. To listen in on the hobgoblins' argument, a character must come within 30 feet of the patrol and make a DC 15 Dexterity (Stealth) check. On a successful check, the character hears the hobgoblins debating whether they should ally with the bugbears in the Caves of Chaos or hire the ogre mercenary that dwells there (both are detailed in "*Caves of Chaos*"). On a failed check, the hobgoblins spot the eavesdropping character and start combat.

Treasure. Each hobgoblin carries a leather pouch that contains 4 GP.



Pine Seeds

> > *Two types of trees grow in this area: one with russet bark and ruby-red pinecones, and another with gray bark and green pinecones. Squirrels and voles scamper about, collecting seeds from fallen cones. After so much travel, your stomachs growl with hunger.*

The pine seeds from either tree are tasty, but the seeds from the ruby-red pinecones are poisonous.

A character can try to identify the edible pine seeds and make one of the following ability checks. Consider these examples:

DC 13 Intelligence (Nature). The character identifies both trees and which seeds are edible.

DC 13 Wisdom (Survival). The character observes that local woodland critters eat pine seeds only from the green pinecones.

On a failed check, a character accidently gathers the poisonous seeds.

Poisonous Pine Seeds. A creature that eats the seeds of a ruby-red pinecone must succeed on a DC 15 Constitution saving throw or have the Poisoned condition until it finishes a Long Rest.

Wilderness Encounters

The following tables present additional random encounters the characters might face while exploring the wilderness. The tables are divided by wilderness region.

To generate a random encounter in a region, roll on the table for that region or choose an encounter you like. Use the map for that region to run combat encounters where necessary.

Random Fens Encounters

1d8	Encounter
1	Three **Gnoll Warriors** scour the wetlands for treasure. The Hostile gnolls demand one piece of equipment or a magic item from the characters and start combat if their demands aren't met.
2	Two **Goblin Warriors** scoop mud from a lizardfolk mound as a belated birthday present for their boss. The goblins are Indifferent toward the characters and ask them to rate the gift.
3	A nearby bog burps out two **Steam Mephits** that smell like rotten eggs. The Indifferent mephits try to amuse the characters with noisy emissions of stinky steam.
4	Two **Kuo-Toa Marauders** try to kidnap the characters and sacrifice them to an ancient swamp god.

1d8	Encounter
5	A Friendly **Lizardfolk Warden** offers to guide the party through the fens. If the characters accept, the warden leads them to Jacko the spy (see the "Spy's Campsite" encounter).
6	Ahead, the corpse of a red-robed cultist lies face down in the mud. The corpse is a Hostile **Zombie** that jolts up and ambushes any creature that comes within 5 feet of it.
7	Two **Gray Ooze Globs** hide beneath a rickety bridge, waiting to ambush the characters.
8	A sudden downpour causes a flash flood. Each character must succeed on a DC 15 Strength saving throw to swim to dry land or take 2d8 Bludgeoning damage from the debris-infested torrent.

Random Tamarack Stand Encounters

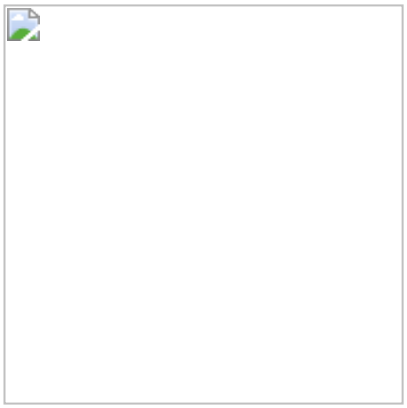
1d8	Encounter
1	The characters meet Mallyn (see *appendix B*) on a daytime hike. She tells them that the pine seeds found throughout this region are delicious (see the "Pine Seeds" encounter).
2	A **Stirge** feeds on an **Ogre Zombie**. Both creatures are Hostile toward the characters.
3	The characters discover an abandoned wagon. One of the crates inside the wagon is a Hostile **Mimic**.
4	A hiker (**Commoner**) with a large backpack needs first aid. As a Help action, a character can tend to the hiker and make a DC 15 Wisdom (Medicine) check. On a successful check, the hiker pays the character 1 GP as thanks. On a failed check, the hiker scolds the party and asks them to leave.
5	A Hostile **Ogre** rummages about an abandoned campsite for morsels.
6	A spooky tree marks the site of an occult graveyard. Four **Skeletons** erupt from the unhallowed ground and ambush the characters.
7	**Pral** and three **Bandits** sing merrily in a clearing. If Pral was defeated earlier (see the "Bandit Ambush" encounter), the bandit leader is his twin brother, Dral. If the characters have one or more musical instruments, the bandits are Friendly and invite the characters to perform. Otherwise, the bandits are Hostile and attempt to rob them.
8	A **Red Dragon Wyrmling** soars overhead in the direction of the *Caves of Chaos*. It ignores the characters and is too far away for any interaction.

Random Trail Encounters

1d8	Encounter
1	Three Hostile **Hobgoblin Warriors** accost the characters along the road.
2	Cornflower (see *appendix B*), the keep's Friendly barn hand, invites the characters to a trailside picnic.
3	Four **Bandits** disguised as soldiers block the road, demanding a 10 GP toll. If the characters refuse or see through the disguises, the bandits fight.
4	An out-of-breath **Guard** chases a runaway **Bandit**. The Friendly guard shouts for help in capturing the Hostile criminal.
5	A proselytizing **Cultist** tries to recruit the characters to the Cult of Chaos. The cultist is Indifferent but fights in self-defense in combat. If the characters accept, the cultist gives them each a small iron bell and performs a short initiation ceremony on the spot. Otherwise, the cultist curses them and continues on.
6	A Friendly **Knight** bound for the Keep on the Borderlands challenges the characters to a lighthearted—and nonlethal—duel.
7	Shannik (see *appendix B*) leads a cavalry charge from the keep as part of a training exercise, and the characters are caught in its path. Each character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 Bludgeoning damage from the charge.
8	A traveling **Curate** offers to heal the characters' wounds if they have any.

Random Woods Encounters

1d8	Encounter
1	A **Goblin Warrior** suspended in a massive web calls for help. If freed, the Friendly goblin helps the characters defeat two Hostile **Giant Spiders** that arrive moments later.
2	The characters come across a swath of trees rotted by a strange blight. A character who examines the trees can make a DC 15 Intelligence (Arcana) check; a successful check reveals the affliction stems from evil magic wrought by occult rituals.
3	Four Friendly **Commoners** around a campsite invite the characters to camp with them for the evening; the characters can take a Long Rest at this campsite.
4	Two **Bugbear Warriors** use a rusty log saw to fell a mighty oak. The Hostile lumberjacks fight any who disturb their work.
5	A Hostile and ravenous **Owlbear** searches for prey. It fights the characters on sight.
6	Oleira (see *appendix B*) the trader is picking mushrooms. She can point the characters to Xanthe's hut (see the "Hermit's Hut" encounter).
7	A majestic stag appears in a picturesque clearing. If the characters approach the stag peacefully, it leads them to the sacred spring (see the "Sacred Spring" encounter). Otherwise, it flees.
8	The characters are caught in a lightning storm. Each character must succeed on a DC 15 Dexterity saving throw or take 2d8 Lightning damage.



Appendix A: Equipment and Magic Items

This appendix describes items and magic items that appear in the adventures.

Equipment

The following items are presented in alphabetical order.

- *Borderlands Tabard*
- *Cultist's Robe*

Magic Items

The Magic Items table contains magic items the characters might find during the adventure. Each item, with the exception of those marked with an asterisk (*), can only be obtained once.

Magic Items

1d20	Item
1	*Boots of Elvenkind*
2	*Cloak of Billowing*
3	*Cloak of Elvenkind*
4	*Clockwork Amulet*
5	*Clothes of Mending*
6	*Dread Helm*
7	*Eyes of the Eagle*
8	* +1 Mace*
9	* +1 Plate Armor*

1d20	Item
10	*Pole of Collapsing*
11	*Potion of Fire Breath*
12–13	*Potion of Healing (Greater)**
14	*Potion of Invisibility*
15–16	*Potion of Resistance (Necrotic)**
17	* +1 Shortbow*
18	* +1 Shortsword*
19	*Slippers of Spider Climbing*
20	*Spell Scroll* of *Fireball*

The following magic items are presented in alphabetical order.

- *Boots of Elvenkind*
- *Cloak of Billowing*
- *Cloak of Elvenkind*
- *Clockwork Amulet*
- *Clothes of Mending*
- *Dread Helm*
- *Eyes of the Eagle*
- *+1 Mace*
- *+1 Plate Armor*
- *Pole of Collapsing*
- *Potion of Fire Breath*
- *Potion of Healing*
- *Potion of Greater Healing*
- *Potion of Invisibility*
- *Potion of Necrotic Resistance*
- *+1 Shortbow*
- *+1 Shortsword*
- *Slippers of Spider Climbing*
- *Spell Scroll (Level 3)*

Appendix B: NPCs

This appendix includes all the NPCs that the players may encounter in the adventures. They are presented in alphabetical order.

Andrella

Human Captain of the Guard

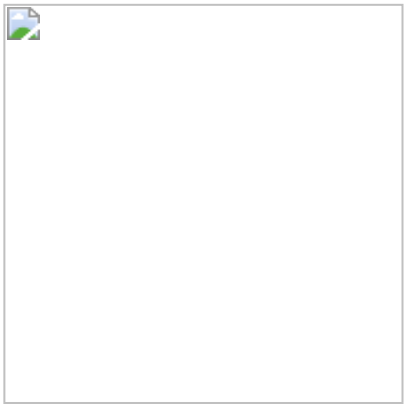
- ***Statblock: Guard Captain***

This captain is strong, stern, and just.

- ***Perfect Posture.*** *Andrella is as strict with her posture as she is with the law.*
- ***Role Model.*** *Many of the keep's young people admire Andrella and enjoy her goodhearted mentorship.*

Rumors>- ***"A dastardly bandit, Pral, accosts travelers along the trail. Apparently he's quite handsome; I'm sure he'll look even better behind bars." (True*)**

- *"The castellan tells me monsters are drawn to the Caves of Chaos in droves. I wonder why." (True)*



Bartho

Human Gate Guard

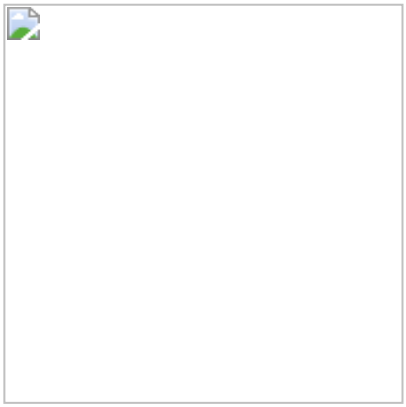
- ***Statblock: Guard***

This gullible recruit spends more time dreaming than patrolling.

- ***Distractable.*** *Bartho is easily distracted from his post because he'd rather be doing anything else.*
- ***Sleepy.*** *Bartho likes to catch a few winks during the night shift.*

Rumors>- ***"If you can't afford a bed at the inn, Cornflower will let you sleep in the barn. The hay's real comfy." (True)***

- *"Minotaurs aren't real. They're just a myth told to scare little children from wandering into caves." (False)*



Cornflower

Halfling Barn Hand

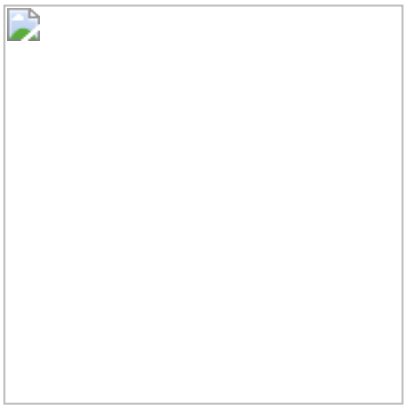
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

This spunky stable hand isn't afraid to get her hands dirty.

- ***Animal Lover.*** *Cornflower's best friends are all barn animals.*
- ***Idiomatic.*** *Cornflower likes to use animal idioms, such as "busy bee," "chicken out," and "hold your horses."*

Rumors>- ***"Did you know animals have all sorts of special glands? Giant fire beetles are like big glowing cave lanterns! Isn't nature amazing?" (True*****)**

- *"Careful if you go trekking into the wilderness. The tamaracks are overrun with giant spiders." (True)*



Dwern

Dwarf Scribe

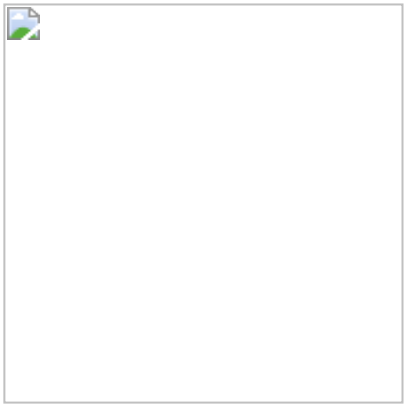
- ***Statblock: Noble***

This gruff scribe prefers the company of books over people.

- ***Bookworm.*** *Dwern has read more books than anyone else in the keep.*
- ***Curmudgeonly.*** *Dwern is ill-tempered toward younger people—which, to him, are most people.*

Rumors>- ***"The guild house's library boasts a modest but impressive collection of books on history and magic." (True*****)**

- *"There's an ancient statue somewhere in the forests north of the keep. It was once the site of strange rituals. Some say it still is." (True)*



Elandra

Elf Adviser

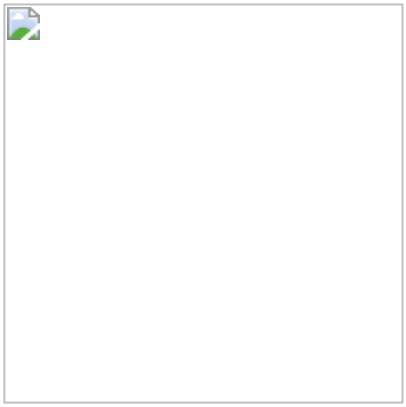
- ***Statblock: Noble***

Elandra provides guidance to the castellan and citizens of the keep.

- ***Cautious.*** *When presented with a choice, Elandra typically prefers the option with the least amount of risk.*
- ***Complainer.*** *Nothing is ever good enough for Elandra.*

Rumors>- ***"Every night, the tavern hosts a rowdy little drinking game with prizes. It's not for me." (True*****)**

- *"Kalista, the keep's blacksmith, doesn't sell weapons to adventurers. If you want to know why, ask her." (True)*



Fazzir

Human Priest

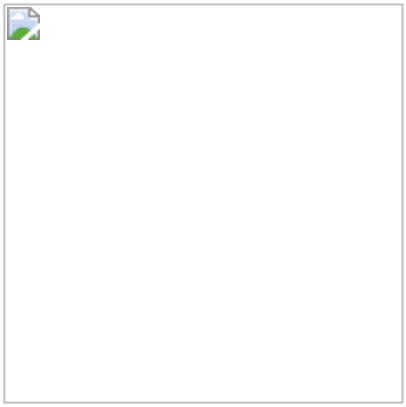
- ***Statblock: Curate***

This spiritual leader offers counsel and healing to all who seek the temple.

- ***Altruistic.*** *Fazzir puts the needs of others before his own.*
- ***Trusting.*** *Fazzir always assumes the best of people.*

Rumors>- *"The keep's former priest, Ivlis, left a large collection of books on all matter of subjects—even occult rituals." (True*)

- *"Anyone entering the inner bailey is bound to cross paths with Shannik, sergeant of the guard. I think he's a little too hard on new recruits." (True)*



Gala

Human Gate Guard

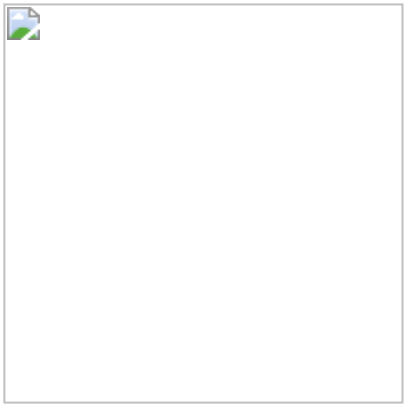
- ***Statblock: Guard***

Though she's memorized all the keep's laws, this guard still has much to learn.

- ***By the Books.*** *Gala clings to the keep's laws—and often recites them aloud—whenever she must make a decision.*
- ***Naive.*** *Gala believes that life is fair, people mostly tell the truth, and good always prevails.*

Rumors>- ***"I've heard the captain of the guard, Andrella, plans to retire soon." (False)***

- *"The keep's coat of arms honors its cavalry, thirty riders strong. I hope to become one." (True)*



Haldryck

Dwarf Innkeeper

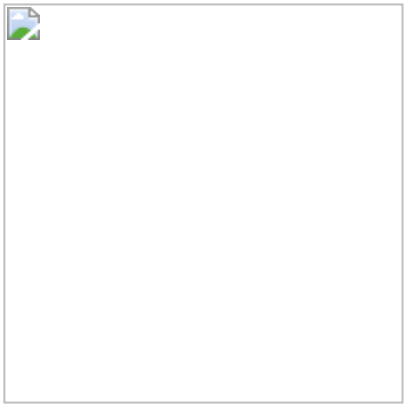
- ***Statblock: Noble***

Jovial and accommodating, Haldryck is a fast friend to anyone who visits his inn.

- ***Epicurean.*** *Good food and drink are the keys to Haldryck's heart.*
- ***Overseller.*** *Haldryck advertises his inn's basic necessities—like clean sheets and doors with locks—as luxury amenities.*

Rumors>- *"The food at the tavern is the best in the Borderlands!" (Doubtful*)

- *"My inn is the only place visitors to the keep can stay overnight." (False)*



Kalista

Dwarf Blacksmith

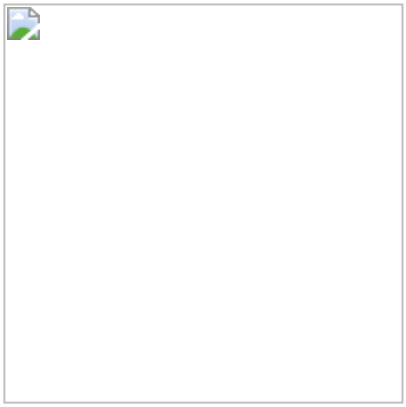
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

The keep's taciturn, hardworking smith prefers to let her hammer do the talking.

- ***Standoffish.*** *Kalista is curt toward people she doesn't know, especially adventurers.*
- ***Stern.*** *Kalista never cracks a smile.*

Rumors>- ***"Every now and then, adventurers return from the Caves of Chaos with magic weapons, but most of the time they don't come back at all." (True)***

- *"Mind your equipment around oozes. Their touch can corrode even the sturdiest of metals." (True)*



Lenk

Human Jeweler

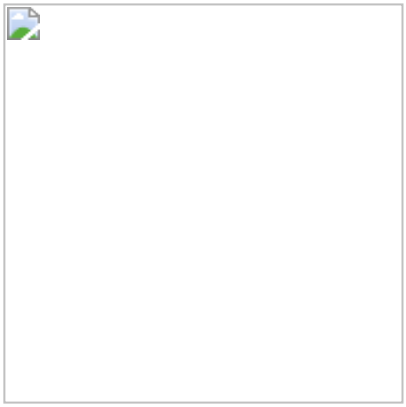
- ***Statblock: Noble***

This elderly jeweler can identify and appraise any gemstone.

- ***Faultfinder.*** *Lenk has a knack for spotting flaws, be they in things or people.*
- ***Pessimistic.*** *Lenk always sees the worst part of any situation.*

Rumors>- *"Your money isn't safe at the bank. I hear a burglar broke in recently and stole every last coin." (Partially true; the burglar was unsuccessful*)

- *"Some stones hide things. The next time you're in an ancient dungeon or old cave, inspect the walls closely. You just might find a secret door." (True)*



Mallyn

Human Traveler

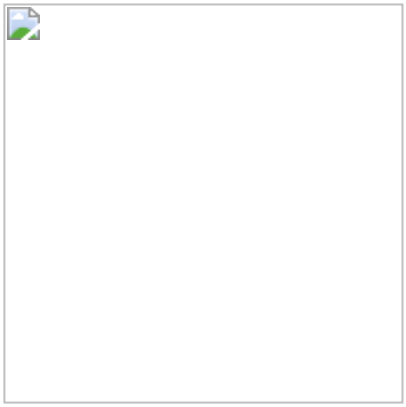
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

This young wayfarer's heart is filled with wanderlust.

- ***Easy Come, Easy Go.*** *Mallyn doesn't get attached to possessions or acquaintances.*
- ***Inquisitive.*** *Mallyn eagerly asks strangers lots of questions.*

Rumors>- ***"Don't wander into the fens unless you're looking for trouble. The lizardfolk there don't like visitors." (True)***

- *"My uncle Umbrusk runs the tavern in the keep. He hears all kinds of gossip in the taproom." (True)*



Oleira

Human Shopkeeper

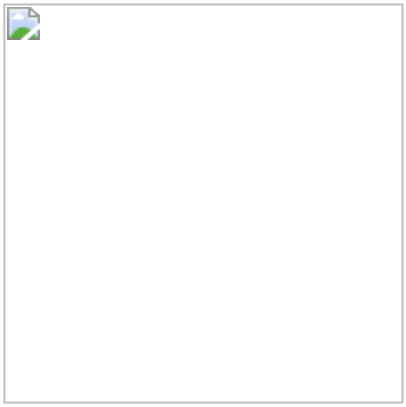
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

This merchant and mother of two deals in wares ranging from common trade goods to curious bric-a-brac.

- ***Fastidious.*** *Oleira can't stand dusty wares. Every item must be spotless.*
- ***Parental.*** *Oleira sometimes treats her customers like she does her children.*

Rumors>- ***"A hermit, Xanthe, was cast out of the keep for practicing evil magic. I hear she was in a cult. Think of the children!" (False)***

- *"The keep's two outer gate guards, Bartho and Gala, are both so green. I'm not sure which of them I trust less to protect us." (True)*



Quink

Halfling Banker

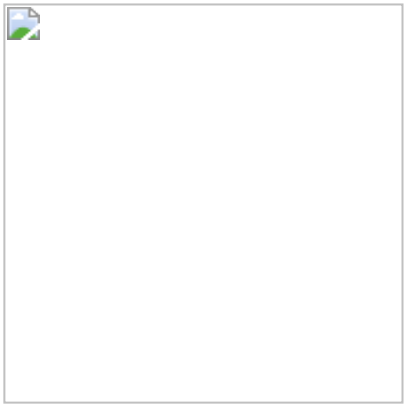
- ***Statblock: Noble***

Quink is a miserly moneylender.

- ***Frugal.*** *Quink never budges on matters of money.*
- ***Garrulous.*** *Conversations with Quink last twice as long as they should.*

Rumors>- *"Good supplies are a sound investment. Ruckus at the provisioner's shop can outfit you with quality gear." (True*)

- *"I've heard dragons are a bit like bankers—we obsess over every coin. If you ever encounter a dragon, don't touch its hoard unless you want to meet its wrath." (True)*



Ruckus

Halfling Shopkeeper

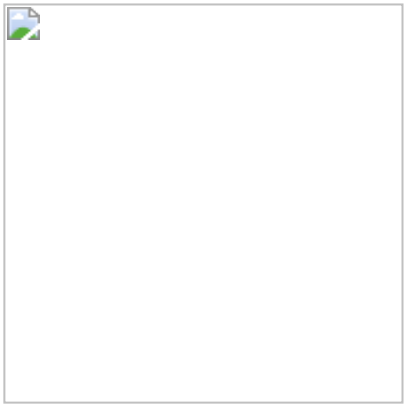
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

The owner of the provisioner's shop is small but has a big personality.

- ***Loud.*** *Ruckus compensates for his short stature by shouting up to taller customers.*
- ***Everything Has a Place.*** *Despite the mess in his shop, Ruckus always knows exactly where to find just what he's looking for.*

Rumors>- ***"I hear goblins throw wild parties." (Oh Yeah*****!)**

- *"Lenk the jeweler gives a fair price for gems and precious stones. He lives in the private apartments." (True)*



Shannik

Human Sergeant of the Guard

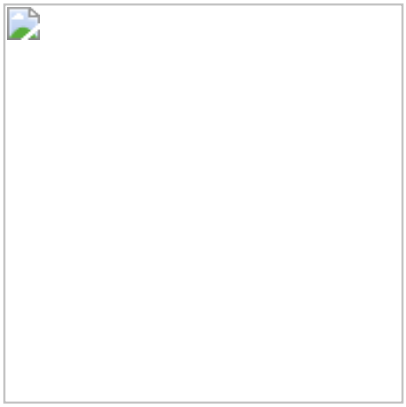
- ***Statblock: Guard Captain***

Captain Andrella's second in command brooks no evildoers.

- ***Brusque.*** *When Shannik can substitute a reply with a grunt, he does so.*
- ***Shortsighted.*** *Shannik's plans and actions fail to account for long-term repercussions.*

Rumors>- ***"An adventurer is only as good as their gear. Oleira at the trader's shop is a friend of mine. She can sell you armor and weapons." (True*****)**

- *"A real soldier can sleep off any injury. After a battle, I usually rent a bed at the inn. I always sleep better there." (True)*



Toryn

Human Guild Master

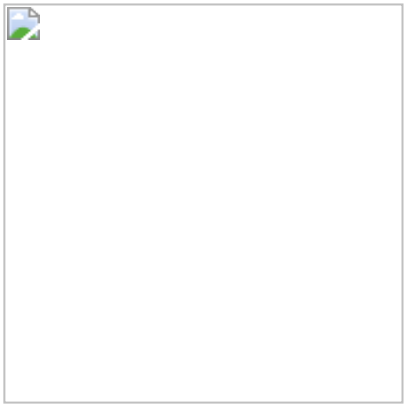
- ***Statblock: Noble***

This guild master helps fellow artisans get a good deal for their wares and services.

- ***Judgmental.*** *Toryn looks down on artisans who refuse to join the guild.*
- ***Witty.*** *Toryn says smart things and always has the last word.*

Rumors>- ***"Castellan Winvarle is the ultimate authority in the keep." (True*****)**

- *"The Borderlands are home to all sorts of trades: musicians, mercenaries, treasure-seekers, spies—even monsters can have a profession. My advice? Pay them what they ask." (True)*



Umbrusk

Human Barkeep

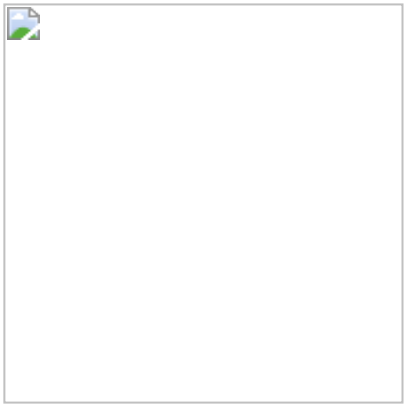
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

Umbrusk serves up drinks, food, and gossip at the keep's tavern.

- ***Eavesdropper.*** *Umbrusk listens to his patrons' conversations.*
- ***Good Memory.*** *Umbrusk never forgets a face or name.*

Rumors>- ***"A traveler named Mallyn walks the trails outside the keep. If you meet her, say hello for me! She's my niece." (True*****)**

- *"Whenever I order a cake, it gets seized by goblins, roadside bandits—you name it. I guess everybody likes dessert." (True)*



Winvarle

Human Castellan

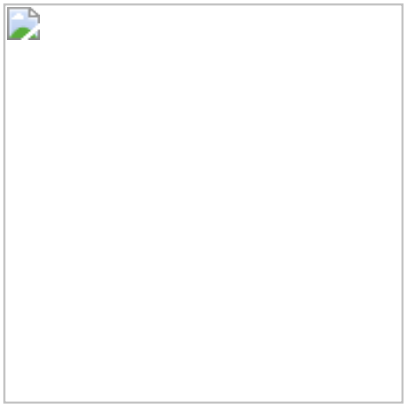
- ***Statblock: Knight***

The keep's noble commander leads his soldiers whenever the keep comes under attack.

- ***Idealistic.*** *Winvarle's ideals are rooted in lofty notions of righteousness.*
- ***Oblivious.*** *While he excels at battle strategy, Winvarle scarcely knows the inner workings of his own keep.*

Rumors>- *"The Cult of Chaos is an affront to all that is good." (True*)

- *"Anyone can pledge to defend the keep. Talk to Andrella in the inner gatehouse if you'd like to join the keep's defenders." (True)*



Xanthe

Elf Hermit

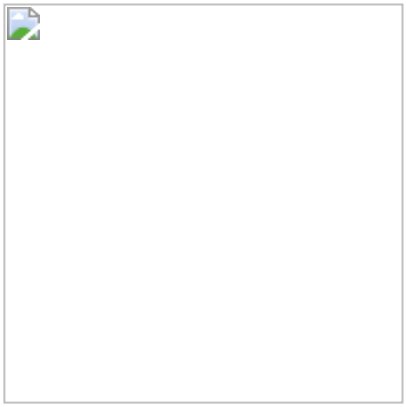
- ***Statblock: Commoner***

One of the Borderlands' oldest and wisest residents was banished from the keep for crimes she didn't commit.

- ***Bad Reputation.*** *Xanthe was wrongfully exiled for using occult magic.*
- ***Distrustful.*** *Xanthe doesn't trust strangers.*

Rumors>- ***"A spy named Jacko prowls the fens. Be wary if you meet him. He'll do anything for coin—even kill." (True*****)**

- *"The temple's head priest is a demon worshiper." (Partially true; Xanthe is referring to Ivlis, the former priest)*



Yvette

Human Bank Guard

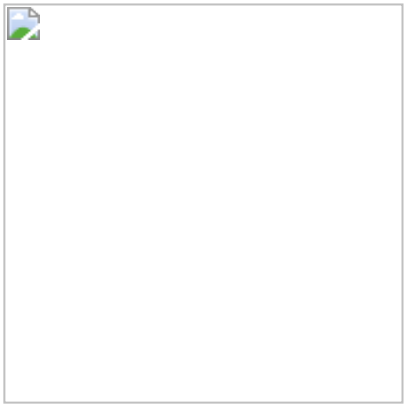
- ***Statblock: Guard***

This corrupt guard exploits her station for selfish ends.

- ***Bitter.*** *Yvette thinks the world owes her.*
- ***Grifter.*** *Yvette is always hunting for new ways to get rich quick.*

Rumors>- *"There's an alms box at the temple that usually contains a few gold pieces. I hear Fazzir doesn't even lock it." (True*)

- *"If you find yourself face to face with an owlbear, just play dead. It will quickly get bored and move on." (False)*



Appendix C: Monsters

This appendix describes creatures that appear in the adventures, presenting them in alphabetical order. The *introduction* of the *Monster Manual* explains stat block terminology and gives rules for various monster traits. Monsters are presented here in alphabetical order.

- **Animated Flying Sword**
- **Bandit**
- **Bugbear Warrior**
- **Carrion Crawler**
- **Commoner**
- **Copper Dragon Wyrmling**
- **Cultist**
- **Curate**
- **Gelatinous Cube**
- **Giant Centipede**
- **Giant Fire Beetle**
- **Giant Spider**
- **Gnoll Warrior**
- **Goblin Warrior**
- **Goblin Boss**
- **Gray Ooze Glob**
- **Guard**
- **Guard Captain**
- **Hobgoblin Warrior**
- **Ivlis**
- **Jacko**
- **Knight**
- **Kobold Warrior**
- **Kuo-Toa Marauder**

- **Lizardfolk Warden**
- **Mimic**
- **Minotaur of Baphomet**
- **Narthus**
- **Noble**
- **Nothic**
- **Ogre**
- **Ogre Zombie**
- **Owlbear**
- **Pral**
- **Red Dragon Wyrmling**
- **Skeleton**
- **Sprite Skirmisher**
- **Steam Mephit**
- **Stirge**
- **Vinx**
- **Wight Lifedrinker**
- **Zombie**

Animated Flying Sword
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Bandit
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Bugbear Warrior
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Carrion Crawler
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Commoner
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Copper Dragon Wyrmling
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Cultist
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Curate
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Gelatinous Cube
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Giant Centipede
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Giant Fire Beetle
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Giant Spider
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Gnoll Warrior
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Goblin Warrior
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Goblin Boss
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Gray Ooze Glob
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Guard
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Guard Captain
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Hobgoblin Warrior
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Ivlis
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Jacko
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Knight
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Kobold Warrior
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Kuo-Toa Marauder
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Lizardfolk Warden
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Mimic
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Minotaur of Baphomet
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Narthus
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Noble
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Nothic
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Ogre Zombie
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Owlbear
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Pral
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Red Dragon Wyrmling
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Skeleton
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Sprite Skirmisher
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Stirge
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Vinx
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Wight Lifedrinker
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Zombie
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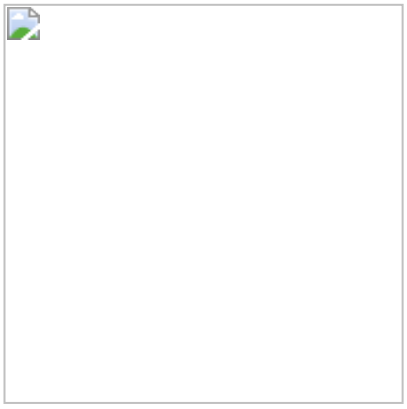
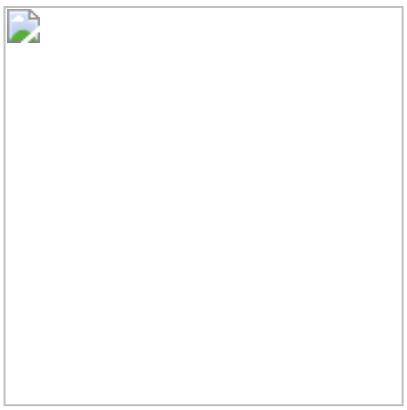
Appendix D: Handouts

This appendix includes all the handouts that appear in the adventures, presenting them in alphabetical order.

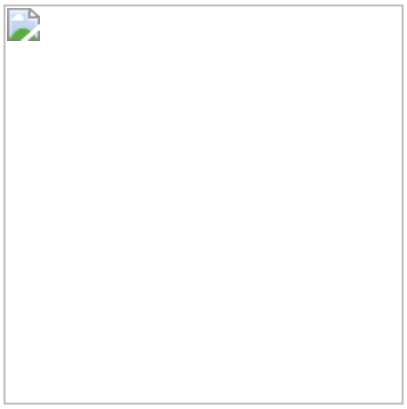
Castellan's Letter Handout



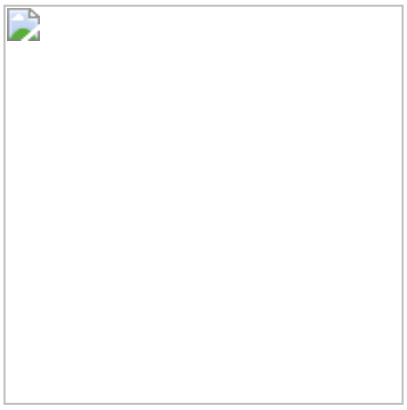
Drunken Dragon Handout



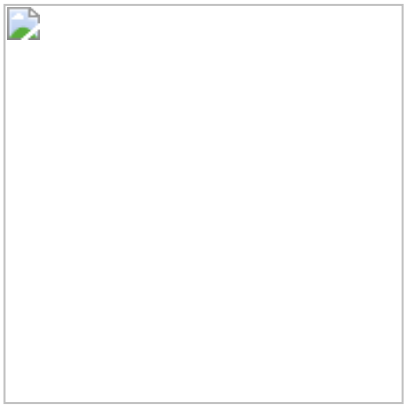
Provisioner Handout



Sacred Services Handout



Trader Handout



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- Special thanks to all the playtesters, whose feedback helped to shape this boxed set.